TIGERS' TEETH

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By the same Author

THE ROPE OF HAIR
OTHER LITTLE SHIPS
RED FLOWERS
BALANCED BURDENS

TIGERS' TEETH

BY THE REV.
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LATELY I found a pleasant story in a Chinese dress, and I would like to pass it on to the readers of this page.

Sen Heng was a Chinaman, a good fellow, but his trouble was that he was timid. He could not stand up for himself. He could not speak firmly. He could not say either "Yes" or "No" and make it sound like it.

So his father sent him to a wise old mandarin called Pow Chung, and when he had stated his case, Pow Chung gave him his advice. "Certain parts," he said, "have been left out when you were made, and these must be supplied. The bravest of all creatures is the tiger, and as it is his teeth he uses to do his terrible works, it is in these that his courage is centred. You must therefore get the teeth of a newly-killed tiger, grind them to powder, mix the powder with rice, and eat it. This must be done three times, a week between each dose."

Sen Heng went away very hopeful, and being

a timid man, naturally tried the easiest way. He went to different villages and asked here and there if anyone had the teeth of a newly-killed tiger to sell. Some laughed and others thought he was crazy. Others thought he was making game of them and got very angry, and he often had to leave a village at great speed, pursued by a crowd of wrathful folk brandishing rakes, and hoes, and rolling pins, and such-like hard and uncomfortable weapons.

Sen Heng soon came to see this was not the way to get tigers' teeth. The only way to get them was to go and kill tigers. So he went to learn the use of bow and arrow. He was a strong lad and in good condition, and he soon could pull a strong bow and aim a strong straight shaft.

Accordingly he went to a drinking-place on a river and climbed a tree. He thought it was safest up a tree when it was a question of tigers. He waited and at last a tiger came down to drink. Sen Heng, trembling a little, but more from excitement than from fear, drew his arrow to the head, took careful aim, and let fly. Joy!

The tiger fell dead with an arrow in its heart.

Then he skinned the tiger, ground its teeth to powder, and ate it in boiled rice. At once he felt the mandarin's medicine working, and next time he scorned to climb a tree. He waited on the ground for the tiger, and when it appeared, he shot so quickly that it was stuck full of arrows before it could get near him, and looked more like a pincushion than a tiger! Then he camped on its skin and had his second tiger's teeth rice-pudding.

Sen Heng soon began to think scornfully of tigers. He did not hide and wait for them; he went out to seek them. But word had gone round among the tigers. They would not face him, and his challenges were only answered by fearful snarlings and growlings. Going boldly to where the growls were most angry, he came on the den of a huge tiger, the very king of tigers, his cave littered with the bones of his victims. Sen Heng walked up to him and pulled his whiskers, and called him names that no one would use who had any

respect for tigers, and boxed his ears and finally took hold of his ears and banged his head on the ground until he was dead.

Then Sen Heng went home to his father and told him he was cured of his timidity, and he gave Pow Chung the three tigers' skins in gratitude. He was afraid of no one afterwards and no one dared to slight him, for every one in China knows that there is nothing makes a fearful man so brave as the powdered teeth of newly-killed tigers!

There is sense in this story. The old mandarin knew that so long as Seng Heng was *thinking* about being afraid he would go on being afraid. It was no use to say, "I *will* be brave. I *won't* be afraid." That would never help him. He must have his mind set on *something* that would make him forget about himself. So Pow Chung sent him after tigers' teeth. His mind was so full of the desire to get them that there was no room for fear.

There are people in this world who are not happy. Their song is, "I'm so unhappy and I want so to be happy and I try—but I can't

find happiness." And they never will, so long as it is their own happiness they are seeking.

There are others who are not out for their own happiness, but bent on making other people happy, and they are happy all the time. Tigers' teeth!

Sacrifice and unselfishness are things that you master by not thinking about them, but about something else, or somebody else. If a boy is keen to be fit and get his place in the school team, of course he gives up sweets and pastries and a lot of nice things. But do not talk to him about the sacrifices he is making, for he will laugh at you. He is after something far better than these, and he does not feel any sacrifice at all in the matter. Tigers' teeth!

Life asks of us bigger sacrifices than these.

For ourselves we will never make sacrifices, or do very much, but there is a true old Scotch song which says—

> "I wad do—what would I no?
> For the sake o' somebody."

God asks us to be good and to shun evil. How are we to set about it? Not by saying, "I *will* be good. How good I was to-day." That will produce little prigs and Pharisees—not real goodness.

Nor will we shun evil by thinking over all the evil we must not do; that will give us unhealthy minds.

There must be a Somebody in our lives for love of whom we are good without thinking about it, and shun evil without looking at it, and make sacrifices without knowing it. There is only one such Somebody, and it is Jesus Christ.

Nothing is too high, nothing too hard, no sacrifice too much, if it be done "for Christ's sake."

"Thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot."—*Rev.* iii. 15.

In the book **When we were Very Young*, which every boy and girl ought to know, there is this quaint little song:

"Half-way up the stairs
Is the place where I sit.
There isn't any other step
Quite like it.
It isn't at the bottom
It isn't at the top
So that is the place
Where I always stop.

"Half-way up the stairs
Isn't up and isn't down:
It isn't in the nursery;
It isn't in the town.
And all sorts of funny thoughts
Run round my head,
It isn't really anywhere—
It's somewhere else instead!"

There is a delightful picture of the little boy sitting at the turn of the stairs, thinking "all sorts of funny thoughts."

* "*When we were Very Young*," by A. A. Milne.

Now that's all very well for a little boy on the nursery stairs, but it's not well at all for anybody climbing the ladder of life. But the little boy among his funny thoughts had hit one thing that is very true, and that is that "half-way up the stairs" isn't really anywhere!

The world is full of half-way people who think they are doing very well; but they "aren't really anywhere."

They are like the old lady who bowed her head at the name of the Devil, and when told it was at the name of Jesus she should bow, she said, "I know that, but it's as well to have friends on both sides."

She wanted to be on good terms with Jesus, for He could help her, and she did not want to be on bad terms with the Devil, for he might hurt her, so she sat down half-way between. In the Gospels, Jesus talks about people who try to serve God and gold; about half-Christians who say and don't do. They are not very good and they are not very bad; they are just middling.

They are like the grand old Duke of York:

"When he was up, he was up;
When he was down, he was down;
When he was in the middle
He was neither up nor down."

They don't want to be *sinners*, and they don't want to be *saints*. They are as near the bottom as the top. They are not anywhere. They are colourless. You can't say what they are, or on what side. You can't tell whether they are going up or down. They have just stopped at the turn.

But I can see this: they are *facing downwards*, for you can't sit on a stair facing upwards; and you will never get up to the top by sitting down, while you are a deal more likely to fall or slide down to the bottom.

In the Old Testament the prophet Elijah asked the people of Israel "How long are you going to halt between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." They wanted to do both, and stayed betwixt and between, and God was angry with them.

The New Testament tells of a city called Laodicea to which the spirit of Jesus said,

"I know thy works, how thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold, or hot." That is to say, "I wish you were something." Hot water is comforting, cold water is refreshing, but lukewarm water just makes people sick.

People like that, Jesus says, are "not fit for the Kingdom of God." They are no use.

Now the turn of the stairs is a tempting place to sit down. There are turns in life's stairs that tempt us to sit down. One is when girls and boys are not children any more, and are not yet women and men. It is called "adolescence." That's a difficult word, but it just means the turn between childhood and manhood or womanhood.

They have learned, as children, to love God in a child's way, to love Jesus, to like to sing and hear of Him. Then just when they should go on some steps higher and stand up on His side, many sit down at the turn and aren't anywhere, and never get anywhere.

Another turn is called "middle age," and that's where many who have been faithful in work and worship just stop and sit down.

Another turn is when people have got on

in business and become rich. Then they retire, and very often people who could find time for God's worship and service when they were poor and struggling and very busy, can find no time when they are rich and at leisure!

Middle age and retirement are yet far ahead for you, but the turn between childhood and manhood is just before you. What are you going to do? Are you going on to follow Jesus all the way, and sit at His table? or are you just going to stop and join the ranks of the "half-way folk"? Half for Christ, and half for self; half for His kingdom, and half for this world, and never out and out on either side?

Girls and boys, it won't do. It isn't really anywhere. You can't serve God and gold. People call it "the golden mean," but it isn't golden and it is mean. Our Lord says, "whosoever is not with Me, is against Me." God can save sinners and bless saints, but the half-way folk even God can make nothing of. They are God's disappointments. We dare not stop, we must go on and on, and up and up to the top, to Christian manhood and Christian womanhood for Christ's sake.

"I wish that thou mayest prosper . . . even as thy soul prospereth."—3 *S. John* i. 2.

ONCE, long ago in Jerusalem, a prophet watched a potter working with the clay on his wheel. He watched the shapeless lump of clay spinning round, and under the potter's hand rising up into the shape of a cup. Suddenly it collapsed. The potter stopped his wheel, crushed the cup back into a lump again, and "made out of it another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make it."

Then an idea came to the prophet, a "word of the Lord," he says; and it was this, that what the potter did to the clay God was doing to His people, making them over again after they had failed in His hand.

That is how "the word of the Lord" came to people: not by a voice that all could hear, but through the eyes that could see and minds that could understand what they saw, and

gather the gold of God's truth from crevices of common everyday things.

That is how "words of God" still come. Here is one that came the other day to a lady who, like the prophet Jeremiah, had gone down to the house of the potter.

It was not in the East where they sit at work but in an English village. The potter stood at his work, and drove the wheel with his foot. When he had finished a work, and was preparing another, she said—

"Your foot must get very tired driving the wheel?"

"No," he said, "it is not the foot that works that is tired; it's the foot that stands."

That was a word of the Lord to that lady, and when I read it, it was a word of the Lord to me, and I want to pass it on so that it may be a word of the Lord to you. It is a word that sings itself into a kind of lilt. Make it one of your songs.

> "It isn't the foot that works that tires;
> It's the foot that's standing still."

Here we are at the wheel of life, trying to

make the clay of our own character into something that will hold and keep the joy and goodness of life.

We have two sides to our nature, like the two feet of the potter, our body and our soul. I suppose a sensible potter learns to work with his left foot as well as his right, and gives them turn about at the treadle, so that both grow strong together, and the strong foot is not held back and hindered by the weak one.

It's no use being one-sided. It's no use having one leg like Sandow's, if the other is a spindle-shank. It's no use having one leg with a calf like the fatted calf, if the other is like one of Pharaoh's lean kine. It's no use being able on the one side to run like Eric Liddell, if the other side can hardly hobble. For the two sides *have to go together;* their pace will be the pace of the slower side, their strength the strength of the weaker.

These things sound absurd; but they are just what is happening to many people in terms of their body and their soul.

One side is very busy; the other gets too little to do. We all have plenty to do on the

one side, men at their work and business, housewives in their homes, boys and girls with lessons and games and hobbies. But the other side, the side of worship and prayer and serving God and reading His word—that side is underworked. And because the soul is underworked, the soul is tired, and because the soul is tired the body tires too.

This world is full of tired folk. They come to the end of the week, they tell you, tired out, too tired to go to church. The reason why they are so tired is not because they have overworked their body; it is because they are underworking their soul. It is tired because it has nothing to do. It's left to loaf about the corners of life, and loafing is more exhausting than any work can ever be.

The remedy for the boys or girls that are tired after Saturday's football or hockey is not to lie in bed on Sunday morning but to get up and go to church and give their souls a chance.

If you're fagged with the week's lessons, the remedy is not to stop thinking, but to think about something else. Go to Sunday-

school or Bible-class and let your mind think on the things of God. Then you will be refreshed for Monday. Tired bodies and worried, wearied, overworked minds will find their healing in worshipping and praising God.

All life will gain strength as the soul is strong ; you will prosper as your soul prospers, and it can't be strong if it be left standing idle.

> "It isn't the foot that works that tires ;
> It's the foot that's standing still."

"In this world ye shall have tribulation."—*S. John* xvi. 33.

I HAVE a little friend called Pristina. No, not Christina. Look again—*P*ristina. Pristina is very little and very neat and has some funny ways. Pristina sometimes plays a little trick on me. It is the trick of shamming dead.

I've seen children play a trick like it. They didn't sham dead but they shammed *deaf*. They didn't hear when they were called because they didn't want to hear. They were playing in the garden, and when they were called they were afraid it was to go a message or to come to their lessons. So they just shammed deaf. Sometimes in the morning they were called to get up and they shammed asleep. Grown up people do it too. A lady rang three times for her maid, and when she came said, "Didn't you hear the bell?" "I only heard it the third time," she replied. For the first two rings she shammed deaf. It's

wonderful what people "don't hear" in church! So we say "There's none so deaf as them that winna hear."

But Pristina does worse. It seems as if Pristina were dead sometimes. It looks like shamming dead.

There are creatures that do that. Pick up certain beetles or spiders and they draw up their limbs and remain quite motionless, to all appearance dead. Lay them down again on the ground and off they scuttle very much alive. It looks like a clever trick, and we say they are "shamming dead." But they aren't, really. By picking them up we have upset their life. We have taken them away from things whose contact is the goad, the stimulus, necessary to keep them alert and active and awake. Taken away from the hardness and roughness of the earth, they seem dead, but it is a sort of paralysis, a sort of stiff cramp that comes over them.

That is what happens to my friend Pristina. She is a little fresh-water worm, and it seems that if you only keep her from touching anything rough, you send her into this queer

death-like sleep. Even a few grains of sand are enough to keep her going.

Now, I think, Pristina is not only a friend of mine; she is you and I. We would like life to be smooth and soft and easy. We think it isn't fair that there should be rough, hard things that hurt: grains of sand that fret us, gravel that gets into our shoes and makes us limp with sore feet, rocks which bruise; and other things worse than these which rub on our heart and soul and conscience—sorrows, temptations, trials, difficulties.

We say, "Why should good things all be difficult? Why should life be full of rubs? Does God love us? Does He care?"

Yes! He does: and it's these very things that show it. If life was smooth and easy our souls would fall asleep. A stiff cramp would come on them; and the remedy for cramp is rubbing. So Jesus says, "In this world you shall have tribulation," and "tribulation" just means "rubs."

When life is easy, the sun always shining, the climate mild, food abundant, and little need for work, as in the islands of the Southern Seas,

the people have never grown up. They are just children, lazy, careless, passionate, unable to look ahead, unable to persevere.

Where life is hard, they are a finer folk. Think only of two little countries. One is Holland, where always they have had to fight the sea for their life and where they had to fight the Spaniards for their liberty and their faith. Holland has played a fine part in the world, and given a high example of brave manhood and womanhood.

The other is Scotland, where the people had to fight against a stern climate and a grudging soil, and between whiles they had to fight the English to keep this freedom. Scotland has done great things and given great men and women to the world. No nations have done more than these two little nations for freedom of land and freedom of conscience.

When God wanted to make His people into a nation, He didn't lead them to the Promised Land by the easy way, but by the desert, through the sand and over the rocks, and by many a sore rub He made them fit to

possess the Promised Land. So a great and wise poet has written :—

> " Then welcome each rebuff
> That turns earth's smoothness rough."

It is the roughnesses of life, its rubs and rudeness, that put "grit" into men ; and we say of a weak person, " he has no sand in him."

We would like to be kept from touching anything rough. We would like a father that does everything for us. I'm sorry for any boy that has such a father for he'll never grow up into a real man. But we haven't such a Father in Heaven. We have One Who loves us too well to make our life so smooth that we just fall asleep and get stiff cramp in our souls. It is because they are difficult that we know what are the best things. It is by the rubs of life our souls are kept awake.

"Add to your Faith, Virtue; and to Virtue, Knowledge; and to Knowledge, Temperance; and to Temperance, Patience; and to Patience, Godliness; and to Godliness, Brotherly Kindness; and to Brotherly Kindness, Charity." —2 *S. Peter* i. 5.

EVERY boy at some time has a collecting hobby. It may be cigarette cards, butterflies, birds' eggs, stamps. It is very fascinating to be a collector, and some go on all their lives. But whether the hobby is for long or for short time, while a boy has it, he is always on the look-out to add to his collection.

In this text St. Peter suggests a new sort of collection: a collection of virtues: and he gives a list of the virtues we ought to be collecting. We are to start with Faith in Jesus, and go on adding these other things.

When I first read this, and for a long time after, it made me think of someone collecting fine pearls, gathering them slowly, and one by one; matching them very carefully; content with nothing but the best, until he had

collected seven pearls of great price—faith, intelligence, resolution, self-control, steadfastness, piety, brotherly love, Christian love, all strung together on the thread of consistent life to be the ornament of Christian character.

But one day I came to think of it in another way. It was a preposition that made the difference. You know what prepositions are? Troublesome little things, but they matter. We need them. They join things together. They are to words what cement is to stones in a wall. It is very important how things are joined together. Reading in the language in which St. Peter wrote, I found that these words, "faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly love, charity," were joined together, not by "to," but by "in." This makes a big difference, for it means that they grow out of each other. Pearls don't grow out of each other. It made me think, not of a necklace of pearls, but of a nest of Chinese Boxes.

Yow know what they are like; a fine large box beautifully made. You open it to see what is inside. You find another, fitting

exactly inside the first. Then another, and another, and another, all fitting into each other, and at the last a ball of the wood out of which they have all been made.

Now let us open up this nest of Chinese boxes. The first is a large one, for it has to take in all the world: it is called charity. Inside it is a smaller one: brotherly love. It is a sort of family box. Then godliness: that is reverence and worship. Then patience: good temper. Then temperance, which is self-control. Knowledge, and intelligence; virtue, which is goodness; and the last thing that you find is faith, which is trust in God through Jesus Christ.

But that is the stuff out of which all the boxes are made; faith is the thing out of which all the Christian graces grow. And that is why Chinese boxes is a better idea than a necklace, for the jewels on a necklace don't come out of each other, and the Chinese boxes do.

We have opened them up and gone backwards to the beginning. Let us begin at the beginning and see how naturally the one grows

out of the other; how nice their order is, and how neatly they fit into each other; in fact, how Christian character grows.

First of all comes faith. This doesn't mean believing something about Jesus; it means believing Jesus, trusting Him, accepting what He says, and saying "He is trustworthy; I'm going to take the Lord Jesus at His word." That is the beginning of it all; everything else grows out of that.

First comes goodness. You act your faith. You do what He says. Faith becomes life, and the life is good. Next comes intelligence. If you do what Jesus says, you come more and more to understand Him, and see how true His words are by testing them.

Out of knowledge comes temperance. That is self-control. You come to understand yourself, and to master yourself. You learn to say "No" to yourself, a very fine thing to learn. Then having learned to master yourself, you next learn to be patient with other people. It just follows. To control oneself makes us patient with people who can't control their tempers.

Then comes godliness; reverence for what is good; and the desire to worship God and honour His name.

Next love of our brethren, and that means not just our own family, but the Christian family. That follows on worship. You can't love God, and not love your fellow Christians.

The last and largest, that contains all the rest, is charity; which means Christian love for all the world, as Christ loved the world. It means that you love your enemies; love people you never saw, are sorry for people that don't know about God's love and the Saviour Who brought it to the world. St. Paul speaks of charity as the belt which surrounds and gathers together all the garments, the Christian habits of his soul. So here it is the box that contains all the others.

You can't leave out one of the boxes. If you do there is a rattle and a noise. You can't leave out one of these graces or there is a gap, which spoils all. And they are all born of faith in Jesus Christ. When the boxes are all fitted together you don't see it,

but you know it is there at the heart and centre of them all.

Girls and boys, it is time you were beginning to think of making your own set of Chinese boxes.

"With God all things are possible."—*S. Matthew* xix. 26.

THIS is another sentence in which a preposition makes all the difference. Once Jesus surprised the disciples by saying that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. They were so astonished that they said, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Now I fancy most people will think this means that *for* God anything is possible: God can do anything.

That is quite true, but it is not what Jesus meant. He did not mean just that God could do what man could not do; but that things that men could not do alone were possible for God and men together.

The Greeks had several words that mean "with." This one is used when we read that "Simon asked Jesus to dine *with* him;"

and that Jesus had "gone to be a guest *with* a man that was a sinner;" and that the "disciples abode *with* Jesus." It means companionship. So "With God all things are possible" means not that God will do something without us that we cannot do by ourselves, but that we can do something *along with* God that we cannot do without Him.

We can see this in other things. Man, by himself, is not very strong. Many animals, most animals in fact, are far stronger. But man has joined hands with great forces, and great things have become possible. He has become a partner with steam, and water-power, and electricity, and with their help has done what he could never have done without their help.

Years ago men wanted a bridge over the Forth. Two mighty spans were wanted, but it was an impossible thing. Then they called in steam to help, and hydraulic power and electricity, and they all worked together. Great presses squeezed the obstinate steel plates into shape and great cranes swung the

heavy loads through the air into their places. At the last, the holes for the rivets that were to make the final join were not quite opposite each other. What was to be done? Nothing, but wait till the sun shone out and with his warmth expanded the great iron girders till at last the rivet holes were exactly opposite each other. Then the electric riveters drove home the red-hot rivets and joined the parts into one; and now the great bridge soars across the river high above the masts of the tallest ships, and the trains thunder across night and day.

The hands and muscles of men alone could never have done it; but when they joined up with these great forces, *with* them the impossible thing became possible.

Now we have got to build up something far finer than the Forth Bridge and far more important, and that is our own character. We have got to master things more obstinate than steel and iron: I mean the stiff and stubborn faults and habits of our own nature. It is a difficult job. We often say it is impossible. "I can't help my temper;"

"I can't remember: I keep forgetting;" "I can't be patient;" "I can't be good as I know I ought to be." What a lot of things we are always saying "I can't" about!

And it is quite true, we can't. Jesus says, "Be ye perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect." We say, "We can't, it's impossible." He bids us love our enemies, and, like poor Aunt Chloe in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, we say, "It's too tough."

We're quite right: it's quite beyond our powers. Jesus Himself would say, "Yes, with men, it is impossible."

Well, then, what are we to do? Aim at something less? Be content with something that is within our reach? Not attempt the impossible?

No! Listen to that other word of Jesus which says, "With God, all things are possible." Say, "I can't alone, but with God helping me I can." If men have done such wonderful things with steam, with electricity, don't you think we could do more wonderful things with God? That is just what Jesus means.

To be like Christ—what a splendid thing! Is it possible? Not for you, or me, alone. We couldn't come near it.

You cannot make yourself like Christ without God; God cannot make you like Christ without you; but, both together, you with God, God with you, it can be done. That stubborn will, that hot temper, that laziness, can all be mastered and wrought into something fine.

With Christ as your friend, with Christ as your guest, your working partner, anything is possible.

St. Paul tried it and found it true. "I can do all things," he says, "through Jesus Christ, Who makes me strong." Many others have found it true. So can you if you will try it.

You have tried hard and honestly alone, and made many failures, and perhaps got discouraged and almost given up trying.

Try again, this time with Christ, and succeed.

"Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance."—*Heb.* xi. 35.

THERE is one thing that is written very plainly across the pages of the Bible, and that is that God is our Deliverer. It is the great book of deliverances. Its histories are full of stories of how God delivered Israel from Egypt, David from Saul, the Jews from captivity, Daniel from the lions, Peter from prison. Its Psalms are full of prayers for deliverance, and thanksgivings because God heard and delivered those who cried to Him in their distresses. Its prophets preach the hope of a Deliverer who should come some day; and when Jesus at last came, He said He was sent "to preach deliverance to the captives." His very name "Jesus" means "Deliverer."

Yet in one place, where the writer is exulting in the long list of those whom God had delivered, he goes on to say, "Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance."

What does this mean? That they refused God's way of deliverance? No! It means that they refused a way of deliverance because it was not God's way. There was a way out, an easy way, but they refused to take the easy way. It means that it is a fine thing to trust God to deliver you in trouble, but it is a finer thing to go on trusting God when He doesn't deliver you; and so the Bible puts among its heroes, and at the top of the list, those who refused the easy way out.

What splendid pages of history these people have written! I see the disciples brought before the very men who had put Jesus to death, and who had power to put them to death. They forbid the disciples to preach Jesus. Peter answers that they must "obey God rather than men," and faces the consequences boldly. The easy way was just to be quiet, but they didn't take it.

Think of the early Christian martyrs: of George Wishart and Patrick Hamilton, of the Covenanters, in Scotland; of Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley in England. To all

there was an easy way of escape, to deny Christ, to hold their peace, to forget their conscience; but instead they did not accept that deliverance, but chose to be loyal to Christ and to conscience. They were burned, shot, hanged, on the hills of Scotland and in the market-places of England, and it thrills us to read of their courage and faithfulness.

Now the Captain of all who choose to be true to God, to their conscience, to their promise whatever the consequences are going to be, is the Lord Jesus Christ. He chose the hard way which led straight to the Cross. Peter, because he loved Jesus and couldn't bear to think of Him suffering, urged Him to take the easy way out; and Jesus called Peter "Satan," and "set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem." And when He was tortured on the Cross, the people said, "He trusted in God that He would deliver Him. Let Him deliver Him. Let the Christ come down from the Cross." And God didn't deliver Him. He died on that Cross.

Why didn't God deliver Jesus and all

these others? I don't know. God Himself knows.

But I know that the world's history would have been a poorer thing if He had, and that it is richer for their brave and heroic choice. The blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the Church, the sufferings of the Covenanters put iron into the blood of Scotland, and the Cross of Christ is the world's salvation.

Is there ever anything like that in your lives? Aren't you sometimes tempted to take the easy way out? The shabby, cowardly, dishonourable way, because it is the easy way?

At school you have done something wrong. You are asked straight, "Did you do it?" The master will take your word. The easy way is just to say, "No"—to tell a lie. No one will ever know, no one but you and God. The other way is to tell the truth and take the consequences, certainly some punishment—for you have deserved it—perhaps the actual pain of a licking.

Take the hard way always. It is a man's way. It may bring pain; but pain will

wear away, and shame won't. It is better to be hurt in your body than ashamed in your soul. It is manly to bear pain like a man, but shame takes away your manhood.

It may seem a little thing that nobody sees, but it is a far bigger thing than you think. Every time a boy or girl refuses the easy way out and takes the hard way, whatever the consequences may be, something is added to the world's golden store of heroism and high faithfulness, and they have written their names in the honourable roll of those who "were tortured, not accepting deliverance," whose Captain is the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE FATHER'S FACE

"He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father."—*S. John* xiv. 9.

THERE was once a very great English poet whose wife had a violent quarrel with him. What the quarrel was about no one knows. He didn't know and she would not tell anyone, or meet him, or let her friends judge the quarrel. After he was dead, she gave a reason that was simply impossible, and so we shall never know what the trouble was.

But she left him, and took with her their infant daughter, and brought her up in total ignorance of her father. The child was too young to remember him, and the mother never spoke of him and there was no portrait of him in her house. The mother never allowed her to meet him, so that she knew nothing about him at all. Of course, she knew she must have had a father, and she knew his name, but she did not even know what he had looked like.

In time father and mother both died, their quarrel unhealed.

One day, when she was no more a child, she was with a friend in a picture gallery, and she was struck by the portrait of a man's face. It was a wonderful face. No one could see it without falling under the spell of its extraordinary beauty. She stopped and asked in amazement: "Who, who is that?" Her friend looked at her in wonder. "Don't you know?" she said. "No, who is it?" "Why, it is your father."

She gazed long at it, in silence. Then she went home and got every book she could lay hands on that spoke of him, and she set herself to find out all she could about him. It was the most wonderful day in her life when first she saw the likeness of her father's face.

I think it is something like the story of God and His children. They had a dim idea of a Father in Heaven, but it was a very dim idea. It was sometimes a very mistaken idea, and they thought very queer and often ugly thoughts of the "Father of

gods and men," as they called him; and their thoughts were more full of fear than of love.

Then Jesus came, and they were drawn to His wonderful face. No one had ever looked like that, so kindly, so lovingly, with such pity and compassion. He came to show the world the Father, but people were slow to understand. They liked to hear Him talk about the Father, but they couldn't see the Father. They saw Jesus, but the Father remained dim and distant.

One night, as Jesus talked about the Father, one of the disciples said what others were thinking: "Show us the Father and that will satisfy us." Jesus said: "Have I been so long time with you and you haven't known Me? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

Then the disciples understood. That wonderful face, so gracious and good, *that* was their Father's face!

So the Bible says: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined into our hearts to give the light of the know-

ledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

How much of this story is your story?

We all say, "Our Father which art in Heaven," but do we really know what our Father is like? We know Jesus, but the Father is dim and hardly known. Isn't Jesus more real to us than God? More clear and near, and so good and beautiful that we are satisfied with Jesus and just stop there and think no farther. Do we know our Father?

We say, "Jesus is like God." I want you to turn this round and say, "God is like Jesus." Jesus came to bring us to the Father and to show us the Father, to make Him real to us, as real to us as He was to Jesus. He wanted to make men see God in Him, and feel that when they had seen Him they had looked on the face of God, our Father.

Now, if you were like the poet's daughter, suddenly shown a face of wondrous beauty, and were told "That is your father," I think you would do what she did: set yourself to

find out all you could about him. Wouldn't you!

Well, that is just what has happened, and just what I want you to do. God has sent Jesus Christ into the world. His face is drawn for us in the Gospels. Look at it. Do you not know Who that is? It is your Father. Read about Him in the Bible. Find out all you can about Him from all who know Him. It is worth while. He is your Father, and to know Him is Eternal Life. There is nothing makes God so real to us, there is nothing so good to say, and to think, and to feel, as this: "God is like Jesus Christ; when I look on Him, it is my Father's face I see."

"As he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgement to come, Felix trembled."—*Acts* xxiv. 25.

I WONDER what you would do if, in a general knowledge paper at school, you found the question, "What is a seismometer?" You wouldn't know and you would try to guess. "'Meter" means that it measures something: but what? A *chrono*meter, a *thermo*meter, a *cyclo*meter, we know, but what is a *seismo*meter? It measures earthquakes.

In a quiet place in Kew, safe from all the shakings of trains and traffic, there is a very delicate instrument with a finely hung needle which carries ink to a revolving drum of paper. Suddenly it trembles, and instead of a straight line there are a series of violent zigzags registered on the paper.

Somewhere (but it cannot tell where; it can only tell how big) an earthquake has occurred. Somewhere the solid earth has shaken, and its shaking has meant ruin and

death and grief. The seismometer says so. The shaking on the other side of the world has set the needle trembling, and there cannot be an earthquake anywhere but this delicate needle will tremble and tell us, and then we wait to hear where the earthquake has happened.

As you may imagine, great care has to be taken of the seismometer. No dust must be allowed to settle on it. It must be kept clean, delicate, sensitive, so as to respond at once to any earthquake, however slight, for often, you know, there are earthquakes so slight that no one notices them, except the seismometer.

Now what I want to tell you is that there is not only one seismometer in the country, there are millions. You each have two.

One is called Conscience. The foundations on which we build our life are Truth and Right. They are the only sound and sure foundations. Yet there are evil things that sap these foundations, and might, without our knowing it, undermine them,

until suddenly our life's building might fall in ruin.

So God has set this delicate thing called Conscience within us, and when anything wrong or false has come into our life and touched the foundations, it trembles and tells us. When St. Paul talked to Felix about right and temperance and judgment to come, we are told "Felix trembled." His seismometer was at work. He wanted to get money from St. Paul. He wanted to please the Jews. He wanted to look after himself; and when he heard about right and wrong and judgment, he trembled. His conscience spoke and told him he was tampering with the foundations of his life.

This seismometer needs to be carefully kept. It is a terrible thing if conscience grows dull and gets out of order. That is one reason why we come to church: to get the dust and the dulness off our conscience, so that it shall warn us swiftly of evil. And this seismometer is better than the fine one at Kew, for that only tells us what has happened, but cannot help us. This one points us to God, to Whom we

must turn when evil has shaken our life; and the same God Who laid the foundations of the world can restore the foundations of your soul.

Your other seismometer is your Heart, which should be touched by the sad and unhappy things of human life. It is a mark of a Christian that he feels the sorrows and needs of others. The heart-touch of need troubled Jesus. We read: "He was troubled in spirit." It means "shaken." There was a trembling, a disturbance, in His heart because somewhere somebody was in trouble and unhappy. The sorrows of our sinful world touched His heart in Heaven and brought Him down to earth to save and help us.

Our hearts should be like that, but I fear they are not. Sorrow in our own family touches us, or among our friends; but the farther away it is the less we feel it, and if it be on the other side of the world we do not really feel it at all.

That is the big difference between us and Jesus Christ, and it is one reason why His kingdom comes so slowly on the earth.

We do not feel quickly and deeply enough for others. We leave distant nations to sit in darkness without the light and comfort of Jesus Christ. The seismometer of our heart is dull and slow, and needs adjusting and finer tuning.

There is only One Who can do us this supreme service—the Lord Jesus. He can make our conscience true and our heart tender, tuning them to His own, and keeping us in both heart and conscience loyal to God's law and to God's love.

"A little child . . . in the midst of them."—*S. Matthew* xviii. 2.

A TALK about Christmas! So that when you are wishing "A Merry Christmas," or "A Happy Christmas," you will not be using just worn and empty words, but you will be putting a great and splendid meaning in them. We are apt to think that Christmas was one of the things that began when people stopped writing B.C. and began writing A.D.; but our Christian Christmas did not begin till a very long time after Christ was born at Bethlehem; and long, long before He was born, people made merry at the time of the year we call Christmas.

The last week of December is the time when the sun is farthest from the earth. Since midsummer the distance has been growing greater and greater. Summer has passed with all its beauty. Autumn has followed with falling leaves and shortening days. Winter

has come when the day is dark in the afternoon, and the trees are bare and the flowers are dead. It is mid-winter. It is called the winter "solstice," the time when the sun seems to stand still for a space and then begins to come nearer to the earth again.

Therefore people made it an occasion of rejoicing, and because the worship of the sun, which gives life and health to the world, is the oldest of all religions, it became a festival in honour of the sun-god.

In the Norse countries they called it "Yule," which is "wheel," and means that the wheel of the year is turning from winter to summer. With great rejoicings and singing of songs, they brought in the yule-log and kindled it in honour of the sun.

In Britain the Druids led the people out into the forests to cut the mistletoe with silver sickles.

In Rome they worshipped the sun under the name of Saturn, and the festival was called the "Saturnalia." People sent presents to each other. They feasted and made merry. Slaves were free for the day and sat in their

masters' seats, and their masters waited on them and served them. Everything was topsy-turvy in a sort of mad, good-natured revel. They sang coarse songs, disguised themselves and acted nonsensical plays, dressed their homes with evergreens, and made merry. And because Rome, and Norway, and Britain all flowed together to make our nation, all three customs came floating into our life from their far sources, so that mistletoe and holly and the yule-log, presents and songs, guisards and paper caps in crackers, and Christmas dinners all tell us where we have come from.

Now after the old Roman world became Christian, people went on keeping the Saturnalia, and although many of the songs they sang and many of the things they did were shameful and unseemly, they clung to the old customs and would not give them up. So wise Christian teachers said, "We must make this into a Christian festival. We'll gather all this rejoicing round the Birth of our Saviour, and that will put a soul into it." And so they did, and it was much

better than preaching against it. Just as Jesus once put a child in the midst of His quarrelling disciples, and it made them ashamed of quarrelling, so the child Jesus in the midst of the December festival and all its coarseness, changed it into the Christian Christmas. They sang carols about the birth of Jesus, and these were so pure that the old, ugly, impure songs just disappeared. They acted plays about the shepherds and the angels, and the cradle that was a manger, and the old plays were soon forgotten. They kept all the good-nature, and the kindliness and the giving of presents to friends and gifts to the poor, but these had a new reason now—it was the birthday of Jesus they were keeping. It was the gladdest time of the year, and all were friends, not because the sun was then coming back, but because the Son of God, the Son of Righteousness, Who is the Light of the World and the Giver of Life Eternal, came to earth then for our salvation, to bring back the summer of God's peace.

Some people used to think that we ought

not to keep Christmas, because once it was a heathen festival, but that is all the more reason to keep it; for it is one of the things the Spirit of Jesus has redeemed. It tells us that He is the Redeemer.

It is a picture of what Jesus is doing for the world. It is a picture of what He can do to you and me: chase away the evil, and make kindness more kind and more beautiful because it is done for Christ's sake and in Christ's Spirit.

We are glad, and we have good reason to be glad, then; to wish each other "A Happy Christmas," and to dream the great dream of the time when, not for one day only shall there be "peace on earth and goodwill towards men," but all the year round and over the whole earth.

"All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over Israel." —1 *Chron.* xii. 38.

THERE is something fine about a great body of people marching all together, with one step, and with level, unbroken ranks. When you hear them coming down the street, "tramp, tramp, tramp," with perhaps the tap of a drum to keep time for them, you cannot help feeling a strange thrill. More than that—there is something infectious about it. Something of its power touches you. You "fall in" without thinking, you take up the step without knowing. If you were feeling tired, you feel less tired. If your head was hanging down, you lift it up. You straighten your back, and set your shoulders back, and step out with a new strength. So great and powerful a magic belongs to a great body of men marching together in step and keeping rank.

Now, a great deal of life is learning to keep rank and to walk in step with others.

At school you learn the laws of figures, how they must be set in rigid rows and how you must keep step with the rules of arithmetic. You will never get the answer to any sum if you do not, and you will get it easier and more surely, just as the ranks of figures are trim and orderly. Chorus singing is learning to keep exact step with the rhythm of the music and the beat of the conductor.

If we are to keep our health, we must keep in step with the laws of health. If we are to have clear minds, we must keep in step with the laws of thought. If we are to act truly as we ought, we must keep in step with the laws of God. A complete life is one in which body, mind and spirit keep step and move in one rank, as one thing.

There are people whose lives do not march : they straggle. Their body comes first, with all its demands for comfort and pleasure, well in front, coming first and taking the best of everything. Then their mind comes next, with its own step, with occasional study, and now and then the reading of a good

book, and, sometimes, some serious thinking. Then, far behind, comes their soul, almost forgotten, left to shift for itself, and making a desperate, fitful dart once a week to catch up with the main body. Body, mind and soul are not keeping touch; they are not keeping rank. They are not marching as one living whole, with one step together. They are not a company: they are a mob: and this is not ordered, purposeful life, but just a huddle and muddle.

Some people think it is clever and original to be out of step. They think it is a mark of genius to break away from the ranks.

There was once a man who served on a jury with eleven others. They were all of one opinion, but he didn't agree with them. He said afterwards: "I never met eleven such obstinate and unreasonable men in my life." It never occurred to him to think that perhaps it was he himself that was out of step and out of rank with common-sense.

There was once a foolish mother who went to see a review. When her son's regiment marched past she looked for her boy, and

came home proudly saying, "All the troops were out of step but my John!"

Now if Christian life is to be a march and not a straggling rabble, there must be someone to set the step—someone who knows how big a step we can take, someone who remembers the burdens that are being carried, and can set the right step, neither too fast nor too slow. When I was in France in the war I was not a good leader. I wanted to walk too quickly for men who were carrying heavy packs. On a picnic excursion the leader must remember the weaker little ones that can only take little steps.

There is Someone Who is wise enough and thoughtful enough for this. It is Jesus. He knows how to set the step; and Christian life means just walking in step with Jesus. That is what He meant by His "yoke." It just meant walking side by side and in step with Him; and the next thing Christian life means is walking in step and in rank with each other.

In the Bible we read: "All those men of war who could keep rank with a perfect

heart came to make David king over all Israel." That tells the secret. It is not just drill that makes men keep step and rank: it is the heart behind it all. The feet are together because their hearts are one in a great purpose. That keeps the ranks straight. The purpose of the Christian Church is to make Jesus King over all the world. Why is Jesus not yet King over all the world? Because His disciples have not yet learned to keep rank. If all Christian folk had that great purpose in their hearts, that would make them keep rank.

Have you joined the ranks yet? Fall in!

"At midnight, Paul and Silas sang praises to God; and the prisoners heard them."—*Acts* xvi. 25.

THERE is a famous Andante by Tschaikovsky, the Russian musician, that you must have heard often, for it is not only played at concerts, but is very frequently played in churches during the collection. I want to tell you how it came to be written.

One day Tschaikovsky was working, but the music would not come. His mind would not work. He was not "in the mood." He could not get any inspiration. But as he sat, he heard a voice singing. It was a painter outside at his work, and as he swept his brush backwards and forwards, he was singing to himself an old Russian folk-song.

Tschaikovsky listened, took his pen, and wrote down the melody. It was just what he wanted, and it came to him like an inspiration. He took it, and added subtle harmonies, and

wrote round it, and made it into a beautiful thing that will live for ever. It has gone over the whole world. It has delighted great audiences in concert halls, and helped the worship of great congregations in churches and cathedrals.

The painter never knew anyone was listening. He just sang his song out of a happy heart that was put into his work, and I do not suppose he even had any idea what became of his song, how far it has gone, and what it has done. We never have. But our lives are overheard, and we must see to it that what is overheard is good.

Browning has a poem about a little girl's song and what it did. She was a little mill-girl in Italy, and she had one holiday in the year—only one, except her Sundays. She spent it wandering up and down her little town, looking at the big houses of the rich folk, and as she walked she sang. It was a song about God, for God was in her heart, and she was happy, and the happiness of her full heart spilled over with song. This was one of her songs—

"The year's at the Spring,
The day's at the morn,
Evening's at seven,
The hillside's dew-pearled.

"The lark's on the wing,
The snail's on the thorn,
God's in His heaven,
All's right with the world."

In the end of the day she goes to bed wondering if her life could ever touch the lives of these great ones. "Approach, I mean, so as to touch them, so as to—in some way—move things, if you please; do good or evil to them in some slight way."

But she had touched them without knowing it, for her innocent songs had been used by God. They had floated into one house, and wakened two who were living in wickedness and lies to remember God, and repent. They had gone into another house and taken the sting out of a malicious letter, and hatred out of a man's heart. They had touched in another one who was thinking to serve his country by doing murder for her, and in a palace they had broken to pieces a plot that

was planning against her own innocent head.

Longfellow tells how he heard a slave singing in the Dismal Swamp—

> "Loud he sang the psalms of David,
> He a negro and enslaved!
> Sang of Israel's victory,
> Sang of Zion bright and free,
> In a voice so full and clear
> That I could not choose but hear."

And the slave's song that he sang to his God became, in Longfellow's poem, a voice to the world.

St. Luke tells in the Book of Acts how the prisoners in the gaol at Philippi heard Paul and Silas singing in the inner dungeon. They had often heard sighs and groans, mayhap curses, coming from that dismal place. How surprised they must have been to hear singing!

They had seen Paul and Silas hustled in with bleeding backs and clanking chains. How amazed they must have been to hear songs of praise; and how intently they would listen!

Girls and boys, the world needs to hear the lives that sing at their work because they love

it; that sing of God because they love Him; and that sing in prison because God has set their souls free. These are the songs that help when they are overheard. The secret of them is a heart filled with the love of God.

"The Lord is my strength and my song," is the song of Moses.

"Thy statutes have been my songs," is the song of David.

"God my Maker Who giveth songs in the night," says the Book of Job.

"He set a new song in my mouth," says the Psalmist.

Has God become this to you yet? Are His commandments songs or only burdens? Is God your song, or are you afraid of Him?

Get closer to Him through Jesus and these things will come to pass. God will be a glad thought that will fill your heart so with His love that it will spill over with singing.

And will—

"Make life, death, and that vast forever
One grand sweet song."

"HE'S A BRICK"

" Ye are God's building."—1 *Cor.* iii. 9.

A CHARACTER in one of Shakespeare's plays speaks of finding " sermons in stones." Here is a sermon found in a brick. I read of it the other day and I wish to pass it on to the girls and boys who read this page.

The brick is in the British Museum in London, and it comes from ancient Babylon. It is a flat brick of sun-baked clay. It bears the royal stamp on it, for it was to be built into the king's palace. Over the royal stamp, and almost blotting it out, is the imprint of a dog's foot. It was never built into the king's palace, but was cast on to the rubbish heap, where it was lost for centuries.

It is easy to see the story of that brick. You can see the workmen moulding the bricks out of the wet clay, the overseer setting the royal seal on each brick, and each batch set out in the fierce sun to be baked hard.

Then comes an interval for rest and food, and the workmen go away, leaving a watchman in charge. For a time nothing happens. The watchman drowses at his post. A hungry dog slinks up looking for scraps. The sleepy watchman wakes to see this unclean prowler and hurls a stone at it. The dog wheels and scurries for the gate. But the mischief has been done. One foot has trod deeply into the soft clay and the king's stamp is blotted by the mark of the beast. There is trouble for the watchman, and the brick, touched by an unclean beast, is no use for its purpose. Out it goes on to the rubbish heap, and there it lies in the dust for hundreds of years, till at last it is discovered and brought to London to tell its silent sermon how the mark of the beast defaced the mark of the king and wasted the work of his servants.

It is the story of many lives. Moulded in God's image, meant to be part of His building, they were wasted. The watchman dozed, conscience fell asleep and some beastly thing set its unclean foot where the print of God's finger had been, and they were no use for God

or goodness. They went into the rubbish heap, outcasts.

You see them in the Gospels. Mary Magdalene was once an innocent girl, clean and pure from the hand of God. But an unclean thought set its foot on her heart and she became an evil thing. You find her in the rubbish heap of life—"a woman of the city, which was a sinner."

Zacchæus was once a decent, honest lad, but a slinking, sneaking greedy thought stamped itself on the soft clay of his nature, and he became a cheat and a swindler, another outcast.

And that would have been all their story, like the story of the brick, had it not been that it was Jesus that found them in the rubbish heap. For He can do with souls what workmen can't do with bricks; He can blot out the mark of the Beast and restore the stamp for the King. He is the Saviour.

He did that with Mary Magdalene, and He did that with Zacchæus. He made them again bricks fit for the building of God.

And he can do that for any one, and He is the only One Who can.

That is great news and good news. But here is better: He can keep us from the beginning, so that the beast shall never set its mark on us, and the mark of the King shall be as clear and undefaced at the end as in the beginning.

And this is the news—the Gospel—for you young folks. Your nature is like soft clay, ready to take any impression and keep it. That is what "character" means. It means "stamp," "impression." You are God's handiwork; you come from Him, you are His; His stamp is on you and He means you to live for Him.

How are you to keep His mark unblotted? It is not easy. Watchers may nod; fathers and mothers can't see everything. Your own conscience may sleep, and some prowling, slinking evil set its ugly mark on you.

One sees faces in the street stamped with the stamp of evil. They weren't like that in the beginning. It is told that an artist used a

beautiful boy as a model for a picture of the infant Jesus. Years afterwards he was painting a picture for which he wanted an evil face. He found one in the street, and paid him to sit. He found it was the same person. The boy, that had served for a model of Christ, had grown up, and the stamp of God was quite blotted out by the mark of the beast!

Girls and boys, you are meant to be real "little bricks," as we say. We know what we mean when we say, "He's a brick," and all who love you want to be able to say it of you, even God Himself.

You are His bricks to build His good world. His stamp is on you in the beginning. You are made in His image; and the only way to keep that image unspoiled and His mark undefaced is to give yourselves now to Christ to keep. It is good to know the Saviour Who restores and remakes and redeems the life that has gone wrong, but it is best of all to know the Saviour Who can keep from the beginning to the end.

RE-CHARGING THE ACCUMULATOR

"He restoreth my soul."—*Psalm* xxiii. 3.

I WAS listening-in one night with an excellent valve set, and everything was going well. The valves glowed and the invisible waves of ether brought me beautiful voices and lovely music. I settled down to enjoy myself for the evening.

Suddenly the valves dimmed their brightness and the music faded into a mere whisper and then into silence, and my programme had come to an untimely end.

What had happened? Of course, all you wireless experts know. You can talk familiarly and knowingly about grid-leaks and wave-traps and condensers and reactions, and a whole heap of mysteries your fathers never knew, and which they regard with awful veneration as "things too high for them." But you know, and already you have said in your minds "accumulator run down." Yes! that was it.

What is an accumulator? Well, it is the thing that accumulates. It accumulates electric current. It makes the valves glow and do their work to choose the right sort of electrons and reject the wrong sort, and make the messages the waves bring such that we can hear and enjoy them.

Now there are two things about an accumulator. One is that it dries up. Evaporation steals from it and brings down the level and it must be filled up with pure distilled water. The other thing about it is that it runs down; and then it must be linked up with the power that is the lights of our city, and re-charged. And we know when it is fully charged because it begins to fizz.

I think our souls are a kind of accumulators. They too, dry up. The air of this world sucks the sweetness out of them, and the level of our thoughts and affections begins to sink lower and lower. We must keep up the level by filling our minds with the pure water of the word of God, by pouring the distilled truth and pure thoughts of God into our minds. That will keep up the high level of our thoughts

where it ought to be and never allow them to sink to levels that are base and unworthy, and that make it impossible for our soul to hear God speaking to us or to tell others of God.

Our souls, too, get run down. We talk of our bodies being "run down," not by motors, but like clocks which are always running down and need to be regularly wound up. We forget that the same thing happens to our souls. Life makes big demands on our love and our patience and our sympathy and our faithfulness, and the soul gets exhausted, "run-down": and they would come to the helplessness and standstill of utter emptiness if we could not get them re-charged.

That is what we are doing when we pray. We may not get what we ask for: that is for God to say; but we get this, that we are touching the source of power and our soul is being restored. That is what we are doing when we go to church and worship God. We are re-charging the accumulator. The Twenty-third Psalm says "He restoreth my soul." It is the same thing: we are touching

the power of the Spirit of God and giving Him the chance to re-store our souls, and fill us with His Spirit.

And here again it is the same with the soul as with the accumulator. We know the one is full up with electricity when it begins to fizz, and we know a Christian is filled with the Spirit of God when he begins to fizz. The Bible doesn't say "fizz;" it says "fervent," which means "boiling," and it is the same thing.

I know people are less careful about charging their souls than they are about charging their accumulators. I know, because if it were not so, there would be more Christians that "fizz" and more fervour in work and worship, more religion at boiling point ready to become steam and strength for God's service.

Girls and boys, I do not need to tell you to watch your accumulators. You have been well warned; you know that if allowed to go quite down they perish; and probably you had to pay for yours out of your own saved-up pocket-money. So you take care.

But I do need to tell you to watch your souls,

for they too can perish, and it was Jesus Christ Who paid for them.

So when next you trudge off to get your accumulator re-charged, be thinking about this other thing too; that you need to have the level of your thoughts kept up to the level of Jesus Christ, you need to have your heart and soul regularly re-charged, and re-stored, and filled with the Spirit so that they shall never fail.

Do these things. Be constant in prayer and in public worship, and your soul will be wise to choose the voice of God from among the many voices of the world, and your heart will glow to hear it.

"Be clothed with compassion, kindliness, humility, gentleness, and good temper . . . above all, you must be loving, for love is the link of the perfect life."—*Col.* iii. 12, 13 (*Moffatt's Translation*).

WHAT a task dressing oneself is! At first, and for a long while, we can't do it. It is done for us; it is done *to* us. Mothers and nurses enjoy doing it, but we don't enjoy having it done. We object. We protest loudly, and kick violently, but it is no good. We are dressed, and everybody gets some pleasure out of it, except us.

Then a great day comes: we dress ourselves. We can do it now, and we feel very grown up. But our troubles are not over; they are only changed. We are continually being "dropped on," because we are not properly dressed. "Johnny, go and change that collar at once. It's not fit to be seen!" "Elsie, go and put on another frock. You can't go out in that one!"

And when we get past these hurdles, we

have only a short time of peace, for the task then becomes a problem, the problem of "what to put on." It's a problem for girls sooner than for boys, but soon it becomes a very serious matter for boys as well. The choice of ties and socks demands anxious thought! One must wear what the other fellows wear. It is a ghastly business to go to school in slacks when plus-fours are "the thing." A boy would rather go to instant execution than be odd in his clothes. Ladies, of course, never have "anything to put on"; "not a stitch fit to wear." This really means that they have a wardrobe full of "stitches," but they can't make up their minds which to put on.

I wonder if we ever give half as much thought to what our souls shall put on? We ought to. It matters far more.

The clothes of our soul are our habits; and, as if we knew that, we borrow the word to describe certain sorts of clothes, and talk about a riding "habit," for instance. Other clothes we buy, but these we weave thread by thread by our thoughts, and words, and actions

until a "habit" is formed, and then it is very difficult to put off once it has been put on. We make them as a shellfish makes its shell. If it lives in clean water and sunlight, its shell is lovely with beautiful colours; if it lives in mud and dirty water, the shell is dull and ugly; and we, too, will have our souls clothed with beauty, or ugliness, as we live and move, and think amid the things that are clean and full of light, or among things that are muddy and unclean and darkened.

Now the Bible has a good deal to say about what we should "put on." It tells us what our soul's wardrobe should be. Listen! "Put on, therefore, as God's chosen ones, consecrated and dear to Him, compassion, kindliness, humility, gentleness, good temper."

What lovely soft stuffs! How delightful to the touch! Nothing stiff and starchy about them; no showing off; their colours are quiet and pleasing to the eye. In what graceful folds they fall! They suit every one whose "habits" they are. This is to have your soul well-dressed.

"Above all," it goes on, "put on love."

This is the belt that gathers all together so that nothing is out of control, or out of place.

That is how Christ wants His children to be dressed. So the Bible says, "Awake! Awake! put on your beautiful garments."

You can't buy them, like other clothes; nor can you fling them on in a hurry. They must be made and put on gradually. Every act of kindness, every thought of compassion, every time temper or conceit is controlled and put to silence, a stitch is added to the beautiful garments of your soul, until like Christ's seamless robe, they are knit into one gracious and seemly harmony.

An old Scottish poet once, thinking on these things, wrote a poem called "The Garment of Gude Ladies," and he finishes by saying :—

> "Wald she put on this garment gay
> I durst swear by my seill (soul)
> That she wore never green nor grey
> That set her half so weil."

Get busy making the wardrobe of your soul. Nothing else will "set you half so weil"; and remember this, that if your soul is not

dressed in these beautiful garments, it doesn't really matter what clothes you put on your body. Everything else wears thin, and fails and leaves your soul, in the end, unclothed and ashamed; but these things never wear out and grow only more beautiful with the years.

A WALK AND ITS ENDING

"And Enoch walked with God: and he was not, for God took him."—*Gen.* v. 24.

THERE are some chapters in the Bible that, I fancy, few people read. They go so far, and then pass over the rest, thinking it will be all the same, just a long list of names and the same things told about each: that he was born, had so many children, lived so many years, and then died. Only that over and over again. So no wonder if people skip to the next chapter.

Now it is never good to skip in any book worth reading, and least of all in the Bible. You always miss something. In such a chapter, for instance, there comes a name, "Enoch," and they did not just say the usual things about him; they said two quite different things.

Somehow it was felt that it was not enough just to say "Enoch lived so many years." That could be said about anybody. So what was said was: "Enoch walked with

God"; and this means that what matters is not how long a man lives, but *how* he lives.

That was the first new thing that was said about Enoch.

Now the Bible has a lot to say about walking with God.

One prophet says: "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God." Another says: "The law of truth was in his mouth, iniquity was not in his lips. He walked with Me in peace and equity," saith the Lord.

What is religion? It is walking with God. If you think out what this means you will have a real and living religion. It is very simple, but it means a lot.

For one thing it means that religion is not sitting still thinking fine thoughts: it is walking. It is "GETTING A MOVE ON." Religion cannot stay in its own house: it must get up and go out and walk among people. We talk of having "a walk in life," that is to say, an occupation, being occupied, and not being idle; in fact, walking means doing something.

Again, walking means PATIENCE. For a short distance you can run, but it is a steady, patient walk for the long miles; and life is a long walk. We can not do it by spurts and dashes. We have got to go on, and go on, and go on, not getting impatient. It is a difficult thing to do in our hasty day, and it is good to be reminded by this word, that the one place you cannot motor or fly to at a hundred miles an hour is the kingdom of Heaven. You must walk all the way, and the Bible tells us that if we "wait" on God, that is, if we let Him set the pace, and do not try to run on ahead at our own pace, we shall "walk and not faint."

One more thing walking means—FRIENDSHIP. To choose some one to go walks with means that you want their friendship. If you were going a walking tour, you would be careful whom you took for your companion. It would be someone who understood you and whom you understood; someone who would not walk you off your feet; someone with whom you have lots in common to talk about; someone you would never get tired

of and who would never get tired of you. The right companion makes you forget the miles. It does not matter so much where you are walking to as whom you are walking with.

Enoch chose God for his companion on the long walk that is called life. Can you do better? He will not get tired of you. He will not walk you too fast. He knows the road.

Boys and girls, the only way to make a happy success of the walk of life is to walk with God and keep step.

Here is the second new thing that was said about Enoch. When his walk passed beyond the sight of men's eyes, out of this world, they felt they could not just say, as they said of anybody else, "Enoch died and was buried." No! They felt a life-long walk with God does not just end that way, so they said, "God took him." That does not mean Enoch did not die. Of course he died. Everybody must die. It means that death was only a milestone in this long walk, the milestone that spelled "near home."

I read of a little girl who was asked to tell the story of Enoch. She said, "Enoch used to go long walks with God. One day they walked farther than usual, and God said, 'Enoch, you are tired. Come into my house and stay and rest.'"

Isn't that a beautiful way to speak of death? And it is the right way.

When Christian fathers and mothers pass out of our sight we have no doubt as to what has come to them. The long walk with God has ended, as it always must end, with the welcome and the rest of the Father's house.

And if we so learn of Christ that our life is a walk with God in everything, we may be sure of two things: one is that our feet will never go astray, and the other is that the end of the walk is the Father's house. If you "take" God as your Friend to walk with, in the end God will "take" you as He "took" Enoch, home.

THE PICTURE THAT WOULDN'T ENLARGE

"The sins of my youth."—*Psalm* xxv. 7.

Most girls and boys nowadays have, I fancy, some sort of a camera. Much of the pleasure of a holiday is found in happy snapshots of friends, and in picking out beautiful views. Then afterwards when you develop and print them, you have the pleasure all brought back to you and the joy of the holiday over again.

I wonder if any of you have tried enlarging your snapshots: that also is a great delight and has a good deal to teach us.

Let me tell you what an enlargement taught me.

I came one day to a beautiful Highland loch. There were dark pine trees and feathery birches, hills receding into the distance, clouds and trailing wisps of white mist, and the loch like a glorious mirror reflecting it all in gently trembling images.

It was a charming picture, so I took it and knew I had got a good thing.

I developed it and was pleased with the result; and then I enlarged it, only to be sadly disappointed.

On the hills and sky were three ugly blots! I looked carefully at the plate and found three tiny "pin-pricks," little holes that did not show on the small print, but which showed dreadfully when it was enlarged. What was at first only a fleck hardly worth noticing, became, in the enlargement, a grave flaw that no one could help seeing, for it spoiled everything.

Boys and girls, life is going to enlarge you into men and women. That is why the "sins and faults of youth" matter so much. They may seem to you very little things, and you may think father and mother are making a great fuss over very little. It is a little thing, and you are little folk; but you are not going to remain little. You are going to be enlarged, and the man or woman you are going to be, will be just the boy or girl you now are only everything on a bigger

scale, both good and bad. Then what was a little fleck on a boy's character is a big flaw in a man's.

A child's flash of temper, a boy's laziness, an untruth, an evil word or thought, are very ugly things when they appear enlarged in the grown-up size.

We cannot escape the enlarging process. It comes with the years that no one can hinder. See to it then that your life as boy or girl holds only the things that can stand being enlarged. What is good is better the bigger it grows, but what is bad is worse.

But you might ask "how did the pin-pricks come in the plate?"

That was my fault. It was just three specks of dust, and I did not take care to dust the plate before developing.

Only three specks of dust, yet they stood between the plate and the influences that would have made the perfect picture! God's wonderful work of mountain and lake and cloud, His glorious light to print it on the sensitive plate, and all the process of the dark room to bring it out—all baffled by three

tiny specks of dust. Result, a nice little picture, but it wouldn't stand enlarging!

Boys and girls, God wishes to print all His beauty and truth on your young sensitive soul, so that the older you grow, the fairer your life may be. But dust can defeat it all; dust on your conscience, dust on your habits of prayer and worship, dust on your Bible, and the likeness of Christ spoiled in us.

Keep these things bright. Dust gathers quickly if things be neglected, and people are often more careful to dust their drawing-room than their soul, and take more trouble to keep their silver from tarnishing than their conscience.

Therefore watch the dust that comes through slackness; and because it is easy to see a lot of dust, but very difficult to see the first speck, pray always to the Lord Jesus to keep your soul clean and pure and kind in the beginning while you are girls and boys, so that when you are men and women you may not be ashamed and He may not be sad.

MENDING THE NETS

"He saw other two brethren . . . mending their nets."
—*S. Matthew* iv. 21.

HAVE you ever on a holiday by the sea watched fishermen mending their nets? The boats are in and at rest. The nets are stretched out and hung up. They are being carefully gone over and any damage the night has done has to be made good, for the fisherman's home depends on his nets.

It is difficult not to stop and watch them. There is something fascinating and wonderful about it. When we see dainty hands doing dainty work we admire; but it is the work we look at, not the hands that do it. But here we see dainty work done surely and neatly by great strong brown hands, and it is the hands we wonder at. They seem unfit for it: more fitted to lift heavy weights, to pull great rough ropes, to haul taut the straining sheets, and to hold the kicking tiller in heavy seas.

But they can do this fine work, too, and they do it with neat and loving care. It makes one wonder, as when a skilful workman shows one how a steam hammer that can crush great masses of iron, can touch an egg without breaking its shell.

Watch them. Here is a worn place where the strands are thin. It must be cut out and made good, or it will go next time and there will be loss. Here is a place torn accidentally on a thole pin, or a cleat. Here another part torn by floating wreckage or by rocks on the sea bottom. All must be knitted up again and made good, and so the bearded faces are bent over the task and big horny fingers go quickly about their task, threading the netting needle in and out and knotting deftly till all is done, and the nets are ready again for their work of gathering God's provision from the seas that folk may be fed.

Do you remember that Jesus called some fishermen from their boats and said He would teach them another sort of fishing? Some others were mending their nets and He called

them, too. He did not say He would teach them another sort of net-mending, but He might have said it, for it is just what He did.

Long afterwards one of these fishermen, Peter, was writing a letter to some Christian folk, and he was finishing it with a blessing. He wrote—"The God of all grace . . ." then he paused and thought what blessing he could ask for them. His mind went back to the old days when he mended the nets. He thought how often the net of his own soul had been torn by passion and stupid mistakes, and gently mended by Jesus, and the word came to him, and he wrote, "make you perfect," "repair you." It is the same word which is used in the gospels for "mending nets."

In other places it turns up again. St. Paul wants the Christians of Corinth to be "perfectly joined together"; their life together is to be like a fine network of love with no gaps or ragged places. In another place he says, "if a man be overtaken in a fault, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness"; that is, knit up his torn self-

respect and broken spirit gently as one mends a net.

We are fishermen and our net is our soul, made up of fine threads of prayer and patience and faith, hope and charity, sympathy and kindness and all the good and gentle strands of virtue. The sea of life is full of God's bountiful provision, and out of the waves and tides of chance and circumstance, joy and sorrow, and all that happens, we are meant to gather good, for it is there.

But nets wear. Patience frays out thin and snaps. Prayer dwindles into a very feeble thing, and big holes come where the net should be knitted firmly with good habits of worship.

Hidden rocks rip the net with rents of sin. Passions tear it. Temptations strain it and it gives. Sometimes, like the disciples' nets, the very bigness of the catch breaks them, and people are so well off and life so full of good things that they forget God, and leave the net of the soul to moulder and mildew and rot.

Then, when it is past our power to mend,

it is good to think that there is someone who can mend our nets : that the strong hands of God, that stretched out the heavens, and hold the worlds in their paths, and set the mountains in their places, can do also this gentle thing for us, can knit up the broken threads and " restore our souls " that we shall not miss to gather His mercies.

That is one thing that it is good to know : that God not only forgives, but mends.

The other is this : that we may learn from the Spirit of Jesus how to mend other folks' nets, comforting those who sorrow, helping those who are tempted, giving a hand to fallen folk and encouraging them to stand up on their feet and try again. It is like mending nets. It needs gentleness and a kind touch. But Jesus can teach us, so that what we need to ask God to do for us we may be made wise to do for others.

It is fine work, mending nets, and it is needed in this world.

A REFUGE

"God is our refuge and strength."—*Psalm* xlvi. 1.

THERE are some words which are just bundles of letters, but there are others that are perfect picture galleries. They call up picture after picture to anyone with imagination, and all children have imagination. They often lose it when they grow older, alas!

So a dictionary is as good as a cinema. You don't need to pay to go in. Nobody ever needs to turn a handle. You just look at your word and the pictures come and go.

Such a word is "Refuge."

Here is one of the pictures it calls up. It is an island in the far Western Highlands. A few little huts cluster together round a little bay. Boats are rocking in the tide. Some are drawn up on the sandy beach. Men are mending nets. Children are tending cattle. Women are busy about their houses. In the background stands a great old round

tower, with only a door some way up the wall, and no windows.

Suddenly, into this quiet scene, comes a man running desperately. In a moment all are alert. Away in the far distance, he tells them, he has seen some long, low, black ships, with one big coloured sail and rows of shields along the bulwarks. It is the Norse pirates! In a moment all is haste and hurry. Cattle are driven away up into the hills as fast as they can go, oxen lowing and sheep bleating in protest.

Children are caught up by scared mothers. Men stagger under such household things as can be quickly carried. All are making for the tower. In a little while all have climbed the ladder to the door in the wall. The ladder is drawn up, and when the Norse pirates dash into the bay and leap to land, there is nothing for them. The cattle are in the hills and people are safe in the tower of refuge. Against its strong walls the Norsemen can do nothing. So they sail away disappointed into the misty distance, and life begins again in the little village, and

everyone knows that what makes it possible for them to go on is just the tower of refuge. Their enemies are too strong for them, but their refuge is stronger than their enemies.

Here is a second picture. It is an open glen among the hills of southern Scotland and a lonely farm steading. There are a few slight buildings, byres and such-like, but the main thing is a strong square tower with narrow slits of windows and a heavy iron-studded door. It has a courtyard in the centre and a small enclosure with a high stout wall, overlooked by the tower. The days pass peacefully, and the nights; until one night a point of light shines on a distant hill, a point that grows until it is a fierce red glow, like an angry eye. It means that the English border raiders are out. At once all are astir, the cattle are driven in, and the gates clang shut. The choicest are driven into the courtyard of the Tower. The women and children are safe inside its strong walls and narrow windows, and the men are on the ramparts of the roof with bow and arrow.

All is well; but woe betide the lonely

farm without a tower of refuge. Surely and certainly the day would come when the morning would dawn on ruined homes, sorrowing women and wounded men; and silent emptiness where the cattle once lowed and the sheep bleated.

These are pictures of long ago, which we call "the good old times." The best thing about the "good old times" is that they are gone for ever! The round tower of the far island, and the square tower of the Borders, are now crumbling ruins, and people go to them, not running for dear life, but laughing, and joking, to picnic, and take snapshots of their old grey walls.

These dangers are gone for ever. But we have our own dangers, things that are too strong for us, and we still need our refuges.

Here is a picture of to-day. It is a common busy street in London. Traffic pours along it in two opposite tides, impudent, yapping motor bicycles, big, swift, silent cars, thunderous heavy lorries, and rushing motor omnibuses. What could any of us do,

caught in the swirl of it? These things would soon make an end of us: grind and crush and batter out our life. I see a girl waiting to cross the street. If she has to wait till there is a gap in both the coming and going traffic, she will be a woman before she gets across. But she needn't wait for that. *There is an island refuge* for her, a little space of raised pavement between the streams of traffic. Once on that she is safe across one half of her adventure, and can wait without fear in the midst of it all for a gap in the tide between her and the farther side. See her make an anxious dive for the refuge, and watch the anxious look pass into a happy smile once she has reached it.

Girls and boys, life has still its pirates and its raiders that are too strong for us: passions that swoop down, temptation that comes plundering and slaying. We are in the tide of this traffic of life, and there are things that are too strong for us. We can't fight them. We must flee. But where to? We need a refuge, and there is a refuge for us. "God is our refuge," says a voice from long

ago. "Our God is a strong tower," says another, "the righteous runneth into it and is safe."

May God be your strength to fight the good fight; and against the things that are too much for you, may God be your refuge.

PASSING SENTENCE ON YOURSELF

"He that ruleth over men, must be just, ruling in the fear of God."—2 *Samuel* xxiii. 3.

THERE is an old saying: "Who shall guard the guardians?" Our text is the answer. The only thing that will make a man just who applies the law to others is the fear of God in his heart. He must be just to others: he may be generous and temper justice with mercy; but to himself he must be strictly just, making no excuses for himself.

Here are two stories of men who passed strict sentence on themselves.

One was a policeman in Pembroke. One of his duties was to summon to the police court people who let their chimney go on fire, for that is an offence, and a fine must be paid.

One day his own chimney went on fire. A nice situation for a policeman! If it had been anyone else, it was his business to summon him and have him fined. But who was

to summon him? If he did nothing, nobody would do anything. Should he let himself off, and say nothing about it? If he did who was there to call him to account? There was God, and his own conscience. The guardian must guard himself, and he did.

He summoned himself to his own police court; appeared in answer to his own summons; admitted that his chimney was on fire; made no excuse, and paid his fine.

There was an honest man. He might let others off, but he wouldn't let himself off.

The other was a British magistrate in East Africa. He went elephant-hunting, and one day to his dismay he found that he had shot a female elephant. Now this is a serious offence and absolutely forbidden. As magistrate it was his business to see that any who committed this offence were fined for it.

So after thinking it all over, he passed judgment upon himself, sentenced himself to pay a heavy fine, and paid it. Afterwards he learned that other hunters, guilty of the same offence, had got off with lighter fines. So he appealed to himself against his own

decision as magistrate for a reduction of the fine. As sportsman he said all he could say for himself to his other self, the magistrate. Then as magistrate he refused to lighten the fine and pointed out to himself that his official position as the representative of the law made his offence worse than the offence of the others, and therefore he deserved to be fined the more severely!

There was another honest man.

Girls and boys, we must be our own policemen and our own magistrates. We may be, and we ought to be, generous in judging others, quick to make excuses for them, and kind in forgiving any wrong that is done to us. But we must be strict with ourselves. We often do wrong things, that nobody knows anything about. There is nobody to rebuke us: and it is easy just to let it go and excuse ourselves to ourselves; and pay no heed to the pricking of our own conscience.

It won't do. Be fair to others, and be fair to yourself, and being fair to yourself means being firm with yourself. Be the honest policeman of your own life; be the strict

magistrate of your own soul. Summon yourself before the bar of your conscience and pass sentence on yourself, when your temper has blazed up in sooty rage. Compel yourself to do as justly as you'd like others to do. And if you think you've been too sore on yourself, and appeal to yourself against your own sentence, dismiss the appeal. Say to yourself. "You are your father's son. You have had all sorts of advantages, of home, and school, and upbringing. That makes it all worse. You ought to know better and do better. Appeal dismissed."

I don't know whether you will ever have to rule over men: but the best preparation for it is learning to rule yourself. But, whether or no, have a conscience that fears God, and to listen to it, a policeman in your own heart that can't be bluffed, a magistrate that can't be bribed.

THE LESSON OF THE LARCH TREES

"Endure hardness."—2 *Tim.* ii. 3.

When boys and girls are home again, and looking back to the happy days of holiday, and the friends they made, I wonder if you made friends with the trees: for it is of one of our trees I wish to tell you.

If you were in the Scottish Highlands you could not fail to notice and admire the larches. They are always beautiful and graceful, with their tall straight trunks and feathery tasselled foliage. They are the ladies of the fir-tree family.

Now, though they are so much at home with us, they are not natives of our land. They belong to the Alps and the Apennines and the Pyrenees, and this is how they came north to visit us nearly two hundred years ago.

In 1738 a friend brought some from Italy and gave them to the Duke of Atholl. He did not know their nature, and thinking,

as they came from the sunny south, they would need care and warmth, put them in his hothouses.

But they did not thrive at all, and at last he had them thrown out into a rubbish heap and forgot all about them.

To his surprise he was told one day, long afterwards, to come and see the despised and rejected trees. There they were, strongly rooted, pushing upwards, and thriving splendidly.

He at once had them transplanted, and from these sprang the beautiful larch woods of Atholl's countryside; and near Dunkeld Cathedral, towering above all the others, are two of these very trees that were once thrown out as good for nothing.

They failed in the hothouse, for they were not meant for hothouse plants. Mistaken care nearly killed them. They needed the keen sharp airs of the mountain-side.

It is easy to make the same mistake with our lives. We would like the hothouse life, sheltered from the east winds of sorrow and the north winds of trial and hard work,

the winds that nip, and bring tears to our eyes. We think comfort is best of all. Fathers and mothers want to save their children from the rough winds, and coddle them, as if they were hothouse plants; and we would like it very well ourselves.

But God knows better. He wants our souls to be, not delicate hothouse plants, but like trees, strong and straight, able to stand up against every wind that blows. So, knowing what He does, the wise Gardener breaks up our comfort, and takes us out and sets us in the wind.

The story of the larches has happened often.

Joseph was the spoilt and petted darling of his father's home; God cast him out, sold as a slave to Egypt. No doubt Joseph wondered if God knew what He was doing. He did: He was making a man of Joseph.

The people of Israel were content with the slave-comfort of Egypt. They had food and houses, work, but no anxiety. God turned them out into the desert; and there, with the keen winds of the desert blowing

through their souls, God made them into a nation of men.

The Puritans had to leave England's quiet gardens and endure hardship in New England; but there they became a great and mighty nation.

England used to send her convicts to Australia. She meant to get rid of them, as good for nothing. But out there, many of them got their chance and made good, and built up a new land for our Empire.

We were like the gardener with the larches in Atholl; we did not know what we were doing; but God was watching, and He knew.

His strong angel of Time pushes us out of the nursery and the quiet peace of childhood into manhood and womanhood, because we are to be men and women, not children always. He pushes us out of the guarded comfort of our homes into the world, that we may find our own faith and stand on our own feet.

We can trust God's gardening. He wants us not to be frail pot-plants, that die in a draught and perish in the open air. He wants

our characters to grow like trees, straight and comely, making the world more beautiful and wholesome, full of kindly shade and strong shelter for those about us. Therefore He denies us the unbroken comfortableness we would like, and bids us endure hardness.

We can trust Him. He did not spare His only Son. He came from the peace of Heaven; He left the quiet home in Nazareth; He was set in the sharp winds that bore bitter things in their breath, even the bitterness of the Cross and Death. Yet by these things He became the Saviour of the World.

We can trust our Father. He knows where the larches can alone grow to their full stature and beauty; not in the hothouse but on the hills.

And He knows that we, too, need the winds we fear, to grow men and women in the likeness of the strong Christ; for we too are meant to live, not in the little selfish enfeebling hothouses of comfort, but on the hills of God's holiness where the big winds blow.

'He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem."—*S. Luke* ix. 51.

WHAT a wonderful sight a crowded street in a great city is! One wonders what they are all doing, where they are going, what they are thinking about. That, of course, you cannot tell; but it is easy to distinguish two sorts of people: those who have a purpose and those who haven't.

Those who have a purpose you can tell by their walk: they go straight forward, nothing turns them aside. They don't stop to look into shop windows. You can tell them by their speed. They don't dawdle. They lose no time. You can tell them by their faces. They are "set." They are thinking about their business. Their mind is not vacant: it is full of something.

So the New Testament tells us that Jesus "set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem." That means that one could see at a glance that Jesus was not just out for a stroll, not

caring where He went. He was not just seeing the country, and ready to turn down any lane that looked inviting. There was purpose in His face and in His walk.

I have a friend who was very popular among the company at a certain holiday place in the Highlands, and a lady said to his wife: "What a pleasant smile your husband has for everybody!"

"Oh!" she replied, "you should see him with his city face."

One day in the winter this lady said to her husband:

"Now I know what Mrs. —— means by her husband's 'city face.' I met him in Sauchiehall Street and I stopped him and spoke to him. Oh! I wish I hadn't. How serious and stern he was!"

"What on earth did you do that for?" her husband replied. "He was busy. He would be going to a meeting and thinking things over as he went. You shouldn't have stopped him."

"Yes," she said, "you're right. I'll know better next time."

So you can tell the busy people. Their faces are set and they walk in a business-like way, and you don't want to stop them.

But there are others. They drift about. They stop at shop windows. They hesitate at corners. It is all one to them which street they go along and chance will settle it for them. Plainly they have no aim. They don't walk; they just saunter.

Recently I read somewhere a curious derivation for the word "saunter." There was a time when it was a great mark of devotion to go on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, in French "La Sainte Terre." People helped the pilgrims on their way, and some crafty people saw an easy way of getting a living in this. They would ask for food and drink at a house, and when they were asked where they were going they answered, "à la sainte-terre." And willingly people gave them food and drink and a night's shelter for the sake of their purpose. But they had no intention of going to the Holy Land; and people got to know it, and when they saw them coming they said "here are some more 'sainte-

terrers.'" They were not Christian pilgrims; they were just sainte-terring. And so the word "saunter" was born.

It is just the same on the great highway of Life. There are those who have a purpose and who show it in their walk, and there are those who saunter. They have no aim. They just drift with every current of custom, or company, or opinion.

They may go to church if some one calls and invites them; they will go a walk if some one calls and asks them; they will sit still if a friend drops in and suggests that they sit still.

They are saunterers, very agreeable, but making nothing of their lives. The king of saunterers was Charles II. He made sauntering popular, and he was one of the worst kings England ever had, and dearly did England pay for her sauntering king!

In our great cities there are a multitude of temptations that beset saunterers. There are all sorts of pests, who never stop and speak to the men who are plainly bent on their business, set on some purpose; but they mark the

saunterers and spread their nets for them. To have a purpose in life is splendid armour against many temptations to evil. To have the highest purpose, to be about your Father's business is the best armour of all. The servants of idleness and sin see at once from face and walk that here is a mind that is preoccupied and there is no entry for anything else.

Our Lord set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem. We must set our faces steadfastly to go to the city of the Heavenly King. There is a hymn that says "Whither, pilgrims, are you going?" Have you got an answer to that? Are you going anywhere, or are you just sauntering through life?

An Irish song begins—

> "I know where I'm going
> And I know who'll go wi' me."

That is a good song to sing, if you are set on pilgrimage to the Heavenly City, and have with you the Great Companion.

"The gifts and calling of God are without repentance."—*Rom.* xi. 29.
"God never goes back on His gifts."—*Moffatt's Translation.*

"No Drawbacks" is a phrase that every school-boy knows. You give something to another boy. He wants to make sure that you are giving it and not just lending it, so he says "No drawbacks?" You answer "No drawbacks," and that rivets it. The gift is given. It is never to be recalled.

We like the chaps who give with "no drawbacks." With the others you never know where you are. One day they give you something. Next day they want it back. "I thought you gave it to me." "Oh! yes, but I didn't say 'no drawbacks.'" You can make nothing of people like that. A promise is a promise, a gift is a gift. If there are to be "drawbacks," then we can count on nothing, we are all at sixes and sevens.

How did we come to be at war with

Germany in 1914? Because Germany and we had both promised not to invade Belgium, and to protect her if anyone tried to invade her. Germany had promised, but she found it inconvenient to keep her promise: she wanted to invade Belgium to attack France. So she drew back her promise and wanted us to draw back ours. But we said "No! we gave our word, there are no drawbacks." And so we had to fight to keep our promise.

Now St. Paul says that God's promises have "no drawbacks." The Bible is full of it. Moses says "Know that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant." A covenant is a promise, and a constant description of God is, "that keeps His promise." "He will ever be mindful of His promise," says one of the Psalms.

To Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, He is a "covenant God"—a promise God. In this verse St. Paul is talking about the Jews, and saying that though they have rejected Christ, God hasn't forsaken them. They have sinned. They have deserved to be cast off. St. Paul

admits that, "but" he says, "God never goes back on His promises."

Jesus, too, was like that. "Having loved His own, He loved them to the end." Peter denied Jesus, but Jesus still loved Peter. There is "no drawbacks" about the love of Jesus. He is the sort of friend that sticks to you even when he has found you out. He gives Himself as your Friend, your Helper, your Saviour. And even though you deny Him and turn away, He doesn't draw back. He is waiting for you, unchanged, whenever you come. No one can say, "I've sinned too deeply. It can't be possible that He will receive and welcome and forgive." It is possible. He said: "Whosoever cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," and there is "no drawbacks" with the promises of Jesus.

Everybody respects the man who keeps his word. A psalm speaks of the man "who sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not"—who keeps his promise though it is going to cost him more than he had expected. It admires him, and says he shall dwell with God.

Jesus has no use for people who promise lightly and draw back as lightly: the man who said "I go" and went not; the man who said "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest," and then went on to say "but . . ." and drew back. Jesus says people like that are not "fit for the Kingdom of God."

Now, when you give your word to any one there must be "no drawbacks." A promise is a sacred thing, and must be kept whatever it costs.

Above all, when you give your promise to Christ, when you take for yourself the promises that once were taken for you, and come to His Table vowed to follow Him, there must be "no drawbacks."

"If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him," says the New Testament; and it goes on to say what I hope you, too, will say, "but we are not of those who draw back."

THE TOWER AND THE SCAFFOLDING

"Our outward man . . . the inward man."—2 *Cor.* iv. 16.

I WAS looking one day at a photograph of my church taken when it was being built. In it one could hardly see anything for a huge scaffolding, a maze of criss-cross planks and knotted ropes. Inside that, one could dimly see a tower taking shape and rising heavenwards.

The scaffolding was very important and had to be well and carefully built, of good stuff; but it was important not for itself, but for the sake of the tower rising inside and by its means. After awhile the scaffolding would all be taken down, but the tower was to stand.

It would be a silly business to build scaffolding at the cost of money and trouble and thought, and after all have it taken down—for nothing. It was for a reason, and when I saw the architect's plan I knew the reason, and saw that all the cost and trouble

spent on the scaffolding was worth while.

The Bible speaks of our life as "God's building."

Well, we have to remember that there are the building and the scaffolding, and not mix the two, and forget the building, or think the scaffolding is the main thing. It is not: for it has to come down and vanish away, but the building is to stand for ever. The building is "you"—your soul, your character, your real self; the scaffolding is all that is given to help you to build that self.

There is the scaffolding of the body.

It is important. You must keep healthy, clean, straight, trained, pure. Why? Because it feels nice to be fit and clean? It does; but that is not the reason. It is because there is a soul building up inside. To be fat through over-eating and laziness, to be disfigured and diseased through intemperance and evil habits, is to put up a crazy scaffolding which makes it impossible for the soul to be built at all.

Think a lot of your body. Care for it

in every good way, because it is the scaffolding of a soul.

But bit by bit it will be taken away by the years. When you are old, your strength and spring and suppleness will be gone. You will not be able to eat anything and everything. You will neither see, nor hear, nor walk so well as now.

That is the scaffolding coming down. All the while the soul should be becoming more visible and beautiful and strong.

At last, finally taken down and laid in a grave, the poor scaffolding will be done with, and the soul it has helped, or hindered, to build will stand before God.

There is the scaffolding of Mind. School-days build that up for the same great reason, not just that you may be clever and your mind stored with knowledge, but that your mind may be made fit to serve your soul.

Then there is the scaffolding of circumstances: money, position, career, business or profession. What is it for?

What matters is not to get rich, to get to the top, to have a big house and motor cars.

That is not success; it is only success if it serves your soul. It is only scaffolding: what are you building with it? Would any man put up a scaffolding for nothing but itself? No. Yet in the building of life many people are doing that. We call them "people of means," and some do not deserve to be called that, because "means" are only "means"; they are not an "end," but only "means" to an "end," and it is not what a man has that makes him rich, but what he is doing with it. The end is the soul, which is to live for ever. All these things pass away. "You" don't. "You" pass on. "You" last for ever. What sort of "you" is it going to be?

Jesus said: "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth."

It is the biggest mistake in the world to think it does; for it turns a fair body and face into vanity, and a clever mind into conceit, and riches into vulgarity and selfishness; and the soul remains stunted and unbuilt.

We may all be truly "men of means," not because we have much, but because of what we are doing with what we have. God is the architect of our life. He has His plan, drawn fair and beautiful, of what we are meant to be. The pattern is Jesus Christ, and all He puts into our hands is the means for building up our soul into His likeness.

At last all the scaffolding of body, mind and circumstance will be taken away, and the soul we have wrought out will appear before God, to His glory, or to our own shame.

FOLLOWING A STAR

"And lo ! the star . . . went before them."—*S. Matthew* ii. 9.

We have all read of the three men who came from the East to Bethlehem.

The Bible calls them "wise men"; but I wonder what their neighbours called them. I am sure they would call them anything but wise, for the wise men of the world are usually laughed to scorn at the time and only afterwards are they called wise, sometimes when it is too late for them to hear it.

We do not know much about them, but we know they studied the heavens and watched the stars.

They believed strange things about the stars. They thought they could read the future from the stars and find out what was going to happen.

They believed each person is born under a certain star, which will determine what his fortunes are to be.

These things are vain dreams, but they

were seeking knowledge from the heavens. I fancy their neighbours would talk about them like this: "They are good men, but queer, distinctly queer! What good will their star-gazing ever do them? They had far better get busy with the things of earth and never mind the heavens. It's better to dig and plant and tend cattle—these are useful things—than waste time watching those far-off stars. It's a pity they've no more sense, for they are wise enough in other ways. It's just a bee in their bonnet."

So they would talk, but the wise men watched the stars and studied the heavens.

One night a new star shone, low and clear, and moving westwards. They didn't know what it might mean. But they felt it must mean something wonderful, perhaps the birth of a king.

So they saddled their camels, and left all and followed the star.

Then how their neighbours would laugh! "They are gone chasing after a star now! Did anyone ever hear the like? As if any place will set them nearer the star than they

are here at home! And if they find their star, what use will it be? A lamp lights your house; a fire on the hearth warms you and cooks a dinner, but what earthly use is a star to anybody? What a crazy enterprise to career across the desert on camels after a star!"

And so the neighbours would talk, shrugging their shoulders, while the wise men with their eyes on the star rode away into the silent night. Now who was right? The folk who scoffed and stayed at home, or the wise men who followed the star.

They never got any nearer the star. That is true. But though they never reached the star, the star led them to Bethlehem. After the shepherds, they were the first to kneel and worship Jesus. The star they followed faded from the heavens without a name, but they saw in Bethlehem One Who is called "The Bright and Morning Star," Jesus Christ our Saviour.

The star-light was better than lamp-light and fire-light, for it guided them to Jesus: and behind all our Christmas offerings and

Christmas gifts given to each other because Christ was born at Bethlehem for our salvation, are the figures of the three wise men, who in faith followed a star and laid their gifts at the cradle of Jesus Christ.

I think this old story has a message for us, and if we learn it we will be on the way to have a good and happy Christmas.

These men followed the brightest and purest thing they saw. It was far beyond their reach, but it brought them to something good.

They were wise in this. We must aim higher than any target we can hit if we are to hit any target worth hitting. We must reach out at the heavenly things if we are to reach the highest things of earth. We must have an aim beyond this earth and follow a higher light than the street lamp or the fire-light comfort.

Jesus says, "Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect." It seems too high for us, a star away beyond our reach. Is it any use trying?

Yes! it is. To come at our best we must

aim at something beyond our best. We must, as another wise man said, "Hitch our wagon to a star."

To be content with mean things, because they are easily reached is never to grow better and wiser or kinder.

Follow the star! Steer by the stars: they will guide you true to the safe harbour. "Covet earnestly the best things," and nothing less than the best. Those who aim high, who follow the star, are on the road to Jesus, though they may not know it: and those who make Jesus Himself their guiding star will never go astray, but will be guided safely and surely over the deserts of life, through the dangers of life, across the seas of life, to the Father's Home. They are the wise men.

"GLAD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY"

"Now, the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise."
S. Matthew i. 18.

At Christmas we sing about the birth of our little baby Who was the Lord and Redeemer of mankind. Our songs are all about the shepherds and the angels, Mary, the crowded inn, the manger, the wise men and their gifts. Singing seems the proper way to tell about it. Hymns and carols are better than sermons.

So we keep Christmas because once in David's royal city, the city of Bethlehem long ago, was born this Royal Babe Who came to save us from our sins and bring us back to God.

But have you thought that Christ is always being born again? Yet it is so. Christ is born often and in different ways, not only as a babe, at Bethlehem, but as a spirit, in the hearts of men and women. Let me tell you of some of these other ways.

Once there lived a man in Jericho who collected taxes. He was not happy, but did not quite know why. He was rich, but that did not make him happy. One day there was a crowd in Jericho, for Jesus was coming. Zacchæus climbed a tree to see Him. Jesus called him down and went into his house. Everybody was surprised, but they were more surprised when Zacchæus came out and said "Half my goods I give to the poor, and if I have cheated any I will make it good four times over."

Something had happened. What? The spirit of Jesus was born in Zacchæus' heart. It was his first Christmas: Christ was born in him.

Once there lived in Italy a young man rich, reckless, wasteful, spending lavishly on his own pleasures. He had no time to think. Then he had an illness which gave him time to think. When he was better, he was a changed man. His thought now was not for his own pleasures, but for the poor folk. He gave up all for their sake and went about preaching Jesus.

Something had happened. What? In the sick-room the spirit of Jesus had been born in his heart, and now we call him St. Francis of Assisi: Christ was born in him.

Once in Perthshire, about thirty years ago, a young man was ploughing a field. At the end of a furrow he stopped and thought for a while. Then he said, "I can do something better than this with my life. With God's help I will be a missionary."

So in that country field Christ was born in the heart of James Stewart, and to-day in Africa there is a happy valley called Levedale, where thousands of happy native folk remember his name and thank God because in that Perthshire field Christ was born in James Stewart.

So Christ is often born. Christmas happens, not once a year, but often. It is not only a day, but a spirit in the hearts of men: it is not the calendar, but the Christ spirit in us that makes Christmas; and that spirit is the spirit which thinks of others, and plans, and works, and gives, for others.

The real joy of Christmas is not getting,

though that is very nice, it is giving. It is a pleasure which begins long before December 25th. Long before that, you are thinking out your presents for others, and hugging your secret, and saving up and denying yourself for it. There is nothing like it. The Christmas shops are full of happy people because nobody is buying anything for themselves. Just for a while before Christmas, we believe that the best way of happiness is to make others happy, and on Christmas Day we find it is true. Christmas Day is the best day in the year because everybody wants everybody else to be happy and is trying to make them so.

That is the spirit of Jesus. That is why "He came down to earth from Heaven."

But why should that only be on one day in the year? Why not Christmas all the year round and always? Some day this will come to pass, when selfishness will be gone, and all men think of others before themselves. But it will only be by Christ being born again in their hearts.

I wish you all a happy Christmas, and great

joy with the gifts you give and the gifts you get. But your happiest Christmas, and it may be any day in the year, will be the day when Christ is born in your heart, and the gift which will bring you greater joy than any other you ever gave will be when you give yourself to your Saviour. That will be your real Christmas, and will give a new joy to the yearly Christmas times. Perhaps you have already done that. I hope you have. If not, why not do it NOW? It is the real beginning of your life, that day, when you can say: "Christ is born again in me," to-day in some Scottish or English town, in an English or Scottish home, in the heart of a girl or boy.

A CONUNDRUM THAT HELPED

"Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look, not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen."—2 *Cor.* iv. 17, 18.

Nobody takes conundrums seriously. They amuse us, set us thinking, start us laughing. "Why does a duck go into the water?" "Why is an elephant like a cabbage?" "Why is a mouse when it spins?" and such-like. They are just fun and nonsense, playing with words. We don't look for anything more in them.

But there may be more. The jester in his cap and bells may sometimes speak wisdom, and even a conundrum may comfort and encourage.

Once John Wesley was walking with a friend whose troubles were vexing him sorely. He told them all to Wesley, and said sadly, "I can't understand it all. If God is Love, why have these things come

upon me? It is all too much for me. I can't see through it at all."

They were walking in the country, and Wesley noticed a cow looking over a wall. He pointed to it and said: "Why does a cow look over a wall?" His friend was surprised, and with a smile he gave the time-honoured answer: "Because it can't see through it." "Precisely," said Wesley, "and if you can't see through your troubles, try looking over them!"

That is excellent advice for us all. Life brings trouble and trial and sorrow to everyone, soon or late, and we can't say why such things happen. We can't see through them. The only thing, then, is to look over them; and they will have done us a real service if they have made us lift our downcast faces and look up.

But there is another answer to the conundrum: "Why does a cow look over a wall?" It is "to see what is on the other side."

There is another side to everything, a heavenly side to every earthly thing; and

often things that, as we say, "are no earthly use," are some heavenly use, if we could see what is on the other side.

I find lots of things in the Bible like that.

The cloudy pillar that led the children of Israel through the desert is one. When it rested between the pursuing enemies and the camp of Israel, it was, we are told, a "cloud and a darkness" to them, but to the children of Israel it was a light and protection. It all depended which side of it they saw, and for a little while they saw the other side, the forward side, the Godward side. When next day it led them again, it would look a dark thing of cloud and shadow; but they would remember, and be sure that the Godward side of the cloud, the side that was towards the Land of Promise to which God was guiding them, was full of light.

Long after these things, God sent another dark cloud to His people. It was the cloud of war and invasion, of defeat and exile. It banked up even deeper and darker, and the people were horribly afraid. Their con-

sciences told them they had sinned, and they said, "This is God's punishment. He has cast us off. Everything is at an end for us. There is no hope."

But there was one man, Jeremiah, that looked over these things and saw something on the other side. He heard God saying: "I know the thoughts I think toward you, thoughts of peace and not of evil, *to give you a future—a hope.*" And we know he was right. There was something on the further side of God's dark clouds, even of His punishments. It's all leading on to something better.

That was the comfort St. Paul offered to the Christian folk of his day in the face of persecution and suffering. They, too, had troubles they couldn't see through. St. Paul knew, for he, too, had suffered, and this is the brave way he speaks: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh a far more eternal weight of glory." "I consider that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed."

So he put heart into men and women, and even if they could not see what was on the other side, he helped them to believe that there must be something, and something more than worth it all.

A young boy, terribly and hopelessly wounded in France, said to me: "Padre, I am certain God has something wonderful for us beyond all this." So he endured, looking over and beyond his troubles.

So our Lord had strength to face the Cross, for the joy that was on the further side, the joy of a better world of men and women because of His suffering on the Cross.

Girls and boys, in the end we will have had a great many things for which to thank God, but I believe the things we will give best thanks for will be just those hard things and dark clouds of sorrow, which taught us to look up and to look ahead.

HIS MASTER'S VOICE

"They know His voice."—*S. John* x. 4.

THAT title at once brings up before the mind the clever picture we have all seen on a hundred gramophone records: the dog hearing his master's voice, recognising it, and looking down the trumpet to see where it is coming from. It is not about that I wish to talk, but it is a dog story I am going to tell.

I think most girls and boys are fond of dogs, and all like a good dog story. Some of the best stories in the world are about dogs. There is the story of Ulysses, how he came home, after all his adventures, so changed that nobody knew him, not even his own wife, save only two—his old nurse, who recognised him by a scar on his knee, and his dog who knew him by that strange instinct which makes a dog such a faithful friend.

Then there is the story of Llewellyn's dog.

who killed the wolf and saved the baby, and was killed by his hasty master. It happened long ago, but still in North Wales there is a place called Bedd Gelert, where people go to see Gelert's grave.

Scotland gives us the story of Greyfriars Bobbie, the little Scotch terrier who lay every night for years on his master's grave and at last died there. The children in the shabby houses that looked on the graveyard cleaned their dirty windows because they "wanted to see wee Bobbie," and, when he died, a drinking fountain was set up to his memory with his statue above it. So darkened homes were lightened and thirsty dogs are refreshed to-day through the faithfulness of a little dog who missed his master's voice, but was loyal to his master's memory.

Well, it was just such another little Scotch terrier in a city street. He had rambled and raced out of his master's sight, and his master, missing him, went to look for him. At last he saw him being hounded and pelted down the road by a lot of noisy children. He was desperately frightened and his tail

was down and he looked wildly here and there for a way of escape. What could he do against these boys? How big they were! How loud their voices! So he was running, and running hard.

Then he heard a voice call "Jock." He stopped and pricked his ears up. It was his master's voice! He couldn't see him, but he knew he was there and would stand by him. He was not friendless or forgotten. Up came his tail and wagged like a semaphore, as much as to say, "Message received." He didn't whine now, but gave a sharp glad yelp.

Then he turned on his tormentors, and, barking furiously, he ran, not from them, but at them. Now it was they who ran, for boys that would pelt a little dog are great cowards. He chased them down the street and came back to his master, his tail waving like a flag of triumph, barking exultantly as if to say, "We've done it! They were too much for *me*, but they couldn't stand up against *us!*" Such heart did the sound of his master's voice put into a little dog,

and made him more than conqueror through him that loved him!

Girls and boys, we, too, have a Master Who loves us and can make us more than conquerors. He never leaves us, but we often leave Him, and get into difficulties, and think we are alone and forgotten. But He doesn't forget. He is watching. Do you remember the disciples in the storm? It was dark and "Jesus was not come to them." But He was watching. The storm was too much for them. They made no headway and they were afraid. Then He came. They heard His voice, and "they willingly received Him into the ship, and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went." I think that just means that His voice put heart and strength into them, and they mastered the waves and came to the shore.

"I can do all things," St. Paul says "through Christ, which strengtheneth me."

Long ago in Scotland when the people were fighting against the power of the Church of Rome, they said about John Knox, that his voice "is able in one hour to putt more

lyf in us than fyve hundred trumpets continually blustering at once in our ears."

So the voice of Jesus has brought cowed spirits to their feet again and made faint hearts brave again to win back lost battles.

In the ship in the storm when every one was afraid, how was it that St. Paul, not a soldier, nor a sailor, but just a man who had been as frightened as every one else, should suddenly stand up and bid them all to be "of good cheer"? Read on, and you will find out. It was because he had heard the voice of Jesus saying, "Fear not, Paul."

"Stand up, stand up for Jesus; the trumpet call obey." His voice is the trumpet call. It never sounds for retreat but always for victory.

"He said to him: Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? And Jehonadab answered: It is. If it be, give me thy hand; and he gave him his hand, and he took him up into his chariot."—2 *Kings* x. 15.

HEART and hand go together in our thought, not only because they both begin with "h," but for better and deeper reasons.

When the doctor is called in to see you, he takes your hand and puts one finger on your wrist. He is finding out whether your heart is all right. The heart is the thing that matters. Our life and health of body depend on that wonderful machine that beats steadily, sending the blood through our body to the lungs and back again. If it beats steadily and strongly, all is well; if its beat is feeble or irregular, things are seriously wrong. So the doctor takes your hand in his and feels your pulse, to find out how your heart is.

We all do very much the same thing. We offer our hand to show that our heart

is friendly; if it is taken and clasped, we know the heart behind the hand is right towards us, for heart and hand go together. We won't give the one where we can't give the other. When we talk of a man being "suitor for a lady's hand," we mean for her heart. She gives her hand because she has given her heart, and in the wedding service they join hands to show that they have already joined hearts.

In the *Tempest* Ferdinand says to Miranda, "Here is my hand!" and she replies, "And mine, with my heart in it!"

In the Bible we read how Jehu, making an end of Jezebel and her wickedness, met Jehonadab. He saluted him and said: "Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?" and Jehonadab answered, "It is." "Then," said Jehu, "if it be, give me thy hand." What he meant was, "Are you on my side in this fight against evil? Is your heart in it? Then give me your hand. It is no use only saying you are on my side. Prove it, pledge it, seal it, by giving me your hand, by putting your hand to the work."

Where your heart is given your hand ought to be given too. I think there is someone putting just that question to every one of us, and that someone is Jesus Christ. He is the Captain of all who fight against the evil things that make the world unhappy. He says, "Is your heart right, as My heart is right with your heart?"

We know His heart is right to us, for He has proved His love by laying down His life on the Cross for us, and there can be no higher proof than that.

It is a terrible tragedy when a man goes to the doctor and is told that his heart is not right. It means so much. It means that he can't live a full active life any more. He must go quietly, avoid hurry or effort, and rest much. He has to fall out of the battle; he is a casualty; he is unfit, and nothing can be done.

One year the picture that received most attention in the Royal Academy was a painting by Sir John Collier. It had no title. It didn't need one. It was a young man standing in the consulting-room of an old doctor,

and their faces told the story. The doctor's head is bowed and his face full of sorrow for what he has had to say. The young man's face is full of dismay and the sense of complete disaster. Sentence has been passed; his heart is wrong. Life is to mean nothing for him, of all he had hoped and planned and dreamed. People looked silently at the picture, feeling the pity of it.

It is a greater tragedy when the heart is not right toward Jesus Christ. We do not need to ask a specialist, to find out; we know ourselves. It is Jesus who asks us, "Is thy heart right?" Are you on the Lord's side? With Him in the war against evil things in the world, and evil things in your own self? Do you want His kingdom to come in you and in the world? Do you want Him to rule and be obeyed by everyone and by you yourself?

You must know. If the answer is "No," it is very serious, and must be faced. What are you going to do about it? For something can be done. God says, "My son give Me thy heart." The Bible is full of

promises of a new heart. God alone can do this. You must pray, and the prayer will be answered, "Create in me a new heart, O God."

But I think the answer is "Yes." Your heart beats true to Jesus. You know in your heart that what He says is true, that it would be good to be like Him, that a world that obeyed Him would be a better and happier world.

Well, then, He Who says "Give Me your heart," says also "Give Me your hand." The one ought to follow the other, and He has a right to ask both. Don't put off and leave things half done. Join hands with Jesus Christ in work and worship, and in the fight against all things evil. When the War called for men to fight for freedom, the hand followed the heart and men joined up. This is a bigger war. Be in it, heart and hand with Jesus Christ.

"THE LONG WAY ROUND IS THE SHORT WAY HOME"

"He led them, not by the way of the Philistines, though that was near; but he led them by the way of the desert."—*Exod.* xiii. 17.

THAT is an old proverb that comes from Italy, but it is true for all the world, and for your life and mine.

We live in a world that is in a dreadful hurry to-day. We want to go faster and faster. People that "get things done quickly" are admired. The short cut to anything is felt to be the best way.

In the old nursery rhyme the girl had a good answer when she asked, "Where are you going to, my pretty maid?" She knew where she was going. But now, even if she knew, she would not have time to answer; for she would most likely be riding pillion on a motor-cycle or whizzing out of sight in a motor-car!

The papers are full of advertisements of

quick methods: how to make hair grow quickly, how to get rid of it quickly, how to learn to play the piano in a month without practising, and so on. Quickness is everything, and we are as sure as Euclid that "the shortest distance between two points is a straight line."

But it is only true on paper. It is not true on the surface of the earth, for the surface is not flat but curved. On the map a straight line from Liverpool to New York is the shortest way, and the track the steamer takes seems the longest; but the sailor knows that on the long voyage "the long way round is the short way home."

I remember once when a boy going to climb Ben Lawers with an old minister and his sons. My idea was just to go straight up. There was the summit; the shortest way must be the quickest. And when our guide led us by a road which went circling away round the mountain, I thought he was a foolish old gentleman. But when at last at the top, I looked at the road I would have chosen, I saw he was right and I was wrong.

My way would have been a hard way; his was easier, more pleasant, and quicker. "The long way round was the short way home."

I go back to the Bible and find God leading His people from Egypt to the Land of Promise. There was a near way, "the way of the Philistines," and there was a long way, "the way of the desert," and it was the long way by which God led them. Why?

Because He wanted them to be fit to enter the Land of Promise. He was not only leading them from Egypt to Canaan, but from the feebleness of slaves to character and manhood and courage. It is easy to go quickly to Canaan, but it is not easy to get to the kingdom of character, and it cannot be quick.

So, because they needed the desert to make them into men fit to have a country of their own, "God led them not by the way of the Philistines, though that was near, but He led them by the way of the desert."

In the New Testament I find Jesus tempted in the wilderness, and each of His temptations was the temptation of the quick way.

What was the way to His kingdom over men's hearts? To bribe them with bread, to master them with power, to dazzle them with wonders —these were the quick ways, and Jesus would have none of them. He saw that no kingdom could stand on these foundations; and so He chose the long slow way of winning men's hearts by love and their wills by persuasion, and their minds by truth. It is the long way round; it took Him by a sorrowful way, and by the Cross; but it is the only way, and it will once more be the short way home.

Boys and girls, do not let yourself be cheated by the short-cut. For some things there are no short-cuts.

At school the short-cut in arithmetic and algebra is to turn up the answer instead of working it out; in Latin to get a crib instead of using your dictionary, or to get some one to do it for you. It saves time; but at the cost of everything else. For it is not the answer that is the great matter, but the discipline of doing the work, and you might as well expect to get good from your dinner

when somebody else eats it! The long way round, the long way of honest patient work, is the only short way into the kingdom of knowledge.

And it is the same in the world of life. Our Father is leading us up the mountain of character. Like my wise old guide, He leads by the way that is best, for He knows best.

He is leading us to a Land of Promise, and He leads us by the way where discipline and effort will make us arrive at that Land of Promise, strong, upright souls, fit to enter in. If He leads us by the desert places of disappointment and temptation and sorrow, it is because these things have their service to our soul. Souls cannot be made in a hurry. Character cannot be created by a word. We would like to choose our own path, but God chooses it for us.

The only thing we can choose is our Companion. If we choose God for our Companion, it does not matter where He leads us, for always we can say, "My Father is always with me." Any road is long without

a companion. With the right companion the longest road is short. And we may be sure that the long road with God is the short way home.

A BRAVE AND WONDERFUL THING

"I am the Resurrection and the Life."—*S. John* xi. 25.

EASTER-TIDE is the time when all the face of Nature is preaching to us the message of Resurrection.

For long months the world has been silent; the fields bare; the trees leafless and gaunt; the birds' voices unheard.

> "Dead and bare the tall trees stand,
> All is chill and cold as death."

It seemed as if all the beauty of the world was buried and lost.

But it was not dead, though it was buried. Nature was a Sleeping Beauty with a spell on her. She lay helpless and silent until the sun, the Fairy Prince, kissed her and she woke to new life!

That is the wonder of Easter-tide. It is as if the Sun, that great light of the world, said what Jesus, Who is "The Light of the World," said once: "The hour cometh and

now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live."

So the world hears and lives. There is a green on the brown fields, a bursting of buds on the trees that shall clothe their nakedness in fair new garments, and a great and glad singing of birds.

It is God preaching from the book of Nature what He preaches in the Book of the Bible—life from the dead—Resurrection.

I want to tell how I once saw it.

It was in a garden. The front was just a bare, dull sweep of gravel, but in the midst of it, like a point of flame, was one crocus.

There had been a flower-bed there, but to save work it had been dug up, its flowers taken away, the earth smoothed and beaten down and covered with gravel.

It seemed the end of that flower-bed; but deep down was one crocus bulb overlooked and left. Under cartloads of gravel that little sleeping streak of life lay sleeping.

Then the Easter sun shone out, and called to it, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and I will

give you light"—sent its long fingers of wakening warmth down into the cold darkness and touched it.

And it wakened from its long sleep and pushed up persistently to the light, through the hard and heavy earth, through the unkindly gravel, burst into the light and unfolded its golden robes to the sunlight.

It seemed impossible, but there it was, a miracle of Resurrection. I thought it the bravest and most wonderful thing I had ever seen, and I can never forget the picture of that stony waste with the brave tiny banner of gold shining out in the midst of it like a gospel.

It *is* a gospel.

Our hearts are often like that garden. The gardener, that loves the hearts of boys and girls, plants them with graces that are meant to flower into beauty and fragrance. "Honesty" and "Lad's Love" and "Forget-me-not," white flowers of Holiness and Truth, red flowers of Sacrifice, deep blue flowers of Faith, with the blue of Heaven in their heart, He plants them and looks to see them

grow. God is the gardener; He did not stop planting gardens because once "He planted a garden in Eden" and it was lost by disobedience.

But evil things of the world come and do the ungracious task of digging them up. It will cost too much to keep them. They dig them up and stamp down the earth on the place and strew it with stones and call it "Progress."

> "But deep in the human heart,
> Slain by the Tempter,
> Feelings lie buried,
> Which grace can restore."

The grace of Christ, the Light of the World, shines upon us, to waken the dead in us, the sleeping beauty of our soul, the forgotten things, the graces that are waiting to be born.

It may be a verse of a hymn that stirs them, some book, the quietness of Holy Communion, the white holiness of a christening and the innocence of a little child, or, mayhap, some sore sorrow.

But it is all the grace of Christ, Who uses

many ways to waken our sleeping souls to life.

Will you hear Him? You have not begun to live till you do.

Is Easter to be only a truth of a far-off garden long ago near Jerusalem, or of the world of Nature around us?

Or is it to be a truth of your own young heart now?

It may be—and it is meant to be. When we sing "Hallelujah! Christ is risen," it should not just be a glad remembrance, but something we know in ourselves.

There is no grave of selfishness, or forgetfulness, or feebleness, or old hard trodden-in habit that has power to hold our soul, if we will hear Christ, any more than the earth and gravel had power to keep down the crocus which answered to the call of the sun.

The ever new message of Easter-tide, the wonderful Gospel of the Resurrection, is "The hour cometh, and *now is*, when the dead shall hear My voice and they that hear shall live."

And, boys and girls, "they" means "you."

"Your sins are forgiven you for His Name's sake."
1 *S. John* ii. 12.

I HAVE read that in Paris there is a very big book, in which are written the names of all the towns and villages in France, and opposite their names the taxes they have got to pay.

But opposite one name there is a strange sentence. The name is Domremy, and what stands opposite that name is this: "Free for ever for the Maid's sake."

What does that mean?

Long ago France was trampled under English feet. English armies marched hither and thither at their will. Half of France was England's and the rest was poor, beaten, and cowed.

In Domremy there lived a maid called Jeanne. She loved her country and was sorry for its sad plight. She thought much about it, and one day she heard voices calling to her. Her soul was "listening-in," and it

heard "France calling"—calling her to save France.

It seemed impossible, and for a time she did nothing and told nobody; but the voice kept calling in her waking thought, and through her dreams, until she became sure it was God's will and, however impossible it might seem, she must do it.

So she went to the King and told her story. Some mocked, some doubted, and some had faith in her and listened.

So she gave herself to France and put a new courage into France's soldiers. They followed the Maid and her banner, winning back town after town, until at last she saw the King crowned in the Cathedral of Rheims.

The rest of the story is sad enough, for it tells how she was taken prisoner by the English, accused by the Church of being a witch, condemned and handed back to the English to be burned at the stake in Rouen. So she died for France.

An English soldier said: "This day we have burned a saint," and soon France came to see it. The wicked bishops and priests

who had condemned her to death died in disgrace and were gladly forgotten; but "The Maid's" name was restored to honour. The people cherished her memory as a saint, and was written in the great book at Paris, which recorded how much each town and village owed in levies, that Domremy was to be "free for ever for the Maid's sake."

I know another book in which something like that is written. There is one entry in it which concerns you boys and girls who read this, for it says, "I write unto you little children, because your sins are forgiven for His Name's sake."

What does that mean?

It means something very like the story of the Maid, but more wonderful. It means that there was pity in the heart of God and sorrow in Heaven for a poor sinful world, conquered by evil and captive to sin. The Lord Jesus heard the earth's need calling, and He came, as a little child, and gave Himself to the world at Bethlehem. And all His life on earth He lived to help and to heal and to comfort, to teach men to know their

Father in Heaven, and to win the victory over things evil. And some mocked, some doubted, and some listened and believed in Him.

In the end He was betrayed into the hands of those who were His enemies, and they tried Him with false accusations and false witnesses, and put Him to death on a cross. So at Calvary the Lord Jesus gave His life for the world.

And because of that our sins are forgiven, "He died that we might be forgiven." So St. John can write to children of his own and every age in every land: "I write unto you little children, because your sins are forgiven for His Name's sake." For the Maid's sake Domremy is forgiven its taxes for ever; for the Saviour's sake the world is forgiven its sins.

Now it was shameful of France to suffer the Maid to be left to die; and it was only proper and decent that France should do everything to honour her name and show gratitude for the freedom she had won for France by her life and death.

We can all see that; but what about Our Saviour?

Surely we must honour His name and show our gratitude to Him for having made us free by His sacrifice. Our freedom is His gift, and it must be used for His glory. If we sing:

"He died that we might be forgiven."

we also go on to sing:

"Oh! dearly, dearly hath He loved,
And we must love Him too,
And trust in His redeeming blood
And try His works to do."

That is what it all means. To be a Christian means to have a great thankfulness in our hearts, because we are forgiven for His name's sake; and a great purpose in our hearts, to live not for ourselves, but for Christ's sake.

"If a man seemeth to be wise, let him become a fool that he may be wise."—1 *Cor.* iii. 18.

"WONDERLAND," of course, makes us think of that delightful country invented by Lewis Carroll, in which we have all wandered and strayed with Alice. It is a world of fancy, yet it is so well described that it has become real to thousands, and we think and talk of the Mad Hatter and the whole of the queer company as if they really existed.

That is the magic of genius : which has made Ivanhoe and Baillie Nicoll Jarvie and Little Nell live for ever. They are words that have become flesh.

But it is more than that. There is more than fun and nonsense in *Alice in Wonderland* and *Alice through the Looking-glass*. There are sense, and truth and wisdom of life.

Think of the White Knight. He wore armour with spikes on it in case he met a shark, and carried a beehive in case he met

a swarm of bees, and a rat-trap in case he met a rat! In fact, he never met any of these things. Some there was no chance of meeting at all, and some very little chance of meeting, but he cumbered himself with all these anxious preparations, and kept falling off his horse, and made a very bad job of his journey because of it all.

Lots of people are like that. They are always anxiously preparing for what never happens; full of fears and forebodings, and their life is a worried failure. The White Knight is not only in *Alice in Wonderland:* he is in the Sermon on the Mount, and he is in life. Sometimes we are the White Knight ourselves.

Then at the end of it all you remember how Alice is sitting afraid before the White Queen and her court who are sitting in judgment on her. Just when sentence is being passed, she says, "Why! you are only a pack of cards," and her troubles are ended.

We are often, like Alice, afraid of things that seem very forbidding, and we sit down under their sentence until we have the sense

to see that they are no more real than a pack of cards, just things that our own fears have painted.

But do you remember the beginning of it all? Alice followed the White Rabbit, and she came to a little door into a lovely garden. She was too tall to pass through, and the garden was closed to her, till she saw a bottle with a label "Drink me," and when she drank it, and I expect it had a bitter taste, she became small and entered in.

Now life has many wonderlands for us, and there is only one way into them all: we must become little. There is the Wonderland of Music. However much you think you know, you must confess you know nothing and begin very humbly to learn. You must bow your head to its discipline, and because you want to play tunes, be content to play five-finger exercises and scales. The door is too low for the high head of conceit to enter. We must become little if we would enter the Wonderland of Music.

It is the same with the Wonderland of Art,

of Knowledge: if a man would become wise, says St. Paul, "let him become a fool that he may be wise."

It is most of all true of the Wonderland of Jesus Christ. It is this sort of life that He calls the Kingdom of God, which is more full of wonder than the musical or the vegetable or the animal kingdom, full of wonders though they be: for it is full of the wonders of goodness and love and sacrifice and unselfishness. It is the true Wonderland and it is meant for us all.

The way in is through a very low door: it is called Repentance. This means that we must humble ourselves. Lay aside any thoughts of our own goodness, and stop saying we are "no worse than our neighbours;" give up thinking we are "good enough." Look at Jesus and see what real goodness and love and sacrifice are, and bowing our heads, say: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner."

That is the only way into the wonderland of God. It is the way which turns all our life into a wonderland, whose wonders are

real, and where our guide and companion is the greatest wonder of all, Jesus Christ, whose name is "Wonderful."

SINCERITY

"That ye may be sincere."—*Phil.* i. 10.

I BOUGHT a little statuette one day. It was a very pretty thing and seemed a very perfect thing.

I wished to do something with it which made it necessary for me to dip it in a hot bath to stain it a certain colour. First it went spotty, and when I took it out I was disappointed to find a number of little holes in it which quite spoiled it.

How did they come there? They were faults in the workmanship that had been filled in with wax. It was all right until heat was applied and then the wax melted out and the bad work was plain.

The statuette was a hypocrite. It was not *sincere*. That is what "sincere" meant in the beginning. It is a word which takes you away back into the world of long ago when people had many images in their houses, where we have pictures.

Some were gods for worship; some were just beautiful ornaments for the house or garden. They were made of marble; but sometimes the chisel of the workman would slip and make a fault, or sometimes the working would disclose a fault in the marble, and then the workman would fill in the fault with wax. It looked all right, and would be sold at a cheaper price, and the buyer would take it away thinking he had got a bargain, and put it up in his garden.

But when the sun shone out it found out the difference between marble and wax, for while the marble stood the heat, the wax would melt and run, and the man would sadly come to see that his bargain had been a bad bargain.

So the makers of statues who took a pride in putting out honest work would put up on their sign that their statues were "without wax"—That is what "sincere" really means.

Now you and I are making something which should be as true and beautiful as a marble statue. I mean our character as Christian girls and boys that are going to be Christian

men and women. It is not something to be kept locked away and guarded, like a statue in a museum; but it has to stand the weather of life and the fiery heat of temptation.

So the Bible says, "Be sincere."

It must be honest work, no wax pretending to be marble, no weak places puttied over and seeming to be strong.

For life will soon show that up. The marble will mellow and become more beautiful with age, but the wax and the putty won't, and they will show more and more and spoil the whole.

Our "sins and faults of youth" are not got rid of by covering them over with excuses and soft words. They must be got rid of honestly, with hard work and sharp chiselling, and with God's good help.

There must be no soft places of laziness, or selfishness, or fear, in our character, hidden and covered over. These will melt and run in the fire of temptation, and we shall fail our friends, and shame our own souls, and disappoint and grieve our Lord and Saviour.

We may not be clever, we may not be handsome. God may give us plain tone, or royal marble to work with, but we must be sincere. It is the thing that matters most of all, to be sincere. The Bible tells us we are to "serve God in sincerity and truth;" to "love the Lord Jesus Christ, in sincerity."

There are many things we cannot do or be, and neither God nor anybody else expects them of us; but one thing we can all be, whether old or young, brilliant or ordinary, and that is sincere. Honest in our worship, in our faith, in our friendship, never pretending to be what we are not, no wax in our promises to make them fail and be forgotten, no wax and hidden weakness in our character to melt in temptation and betray us in the time of strain.

Always and in everything be sincere: and you will find the friendship both of God and man.

"Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."—*Col.* iii. 23.

SOME years ago the roof of Glasgow Cathedral needed to be restored. The oak beams that had stood untouched for more than six hundred years were at last showing signs of age, and some had to be replaced by fresh timber.

In the course of the work there was found, away up in a far corner of the roof, the carved head of an angel. Nobody had seen it since the craftsman finished it and set it in its place six centuries ago. No one could possibly see it, for it was out of sight. The man who wrought it knew that, and yet—this is the fine thing—he put all his best skill and love into his work and finished it as perfectly as if it was the most important thing in the Cathedral. He didn't just rough it out because "nobody will see it."

Just a stone for a beam to rest on away up there in the dim roof-shadows! A

roughly-shaped stone surely would have served just as well. Strength was all that was needed. But he added beauty and put his best into it. Why?

Perhaps he felt he owed it to himself to do his very best, to satisfy his own soul and conscience.

Perhaps he felt he owed it to God to put nothing but his best into His temple.

Perhaps he thought, "If nobody sees it, God sees it and I know about it."

We can only guess at what was in his mind from what came out of it, and that was honest and beautiful work, which made the dead stone a living stone, a thing very fair and fine with love and faith, that made those who at long last saw it, wonder and thrill.

So in the Bible we read of the two pillars that Hiram wrought to stand before God's temple in Jerusalem nearly three thousand years ago; how he wrought their shape and design from base to capital. Then it tells us that on the top he carved a design of lilies.

Who could see what was on the top? They pillars were thirty-five feet high. Nobody, but God. So Hiram, like that other workman, took pains with what nobody would ever see, or know of, but himself and God.

How we do the things nobody sees is just what tests us. Because "nobody will see it," we are tempted to scamp, to leave unfinished, to leave undone a lot of things; to have two standards of life and work: one for what is to be seen by anybody and the other for what is to be seen by nobody.

What a difference there is between the backs and the fronts of houses!

I know a church, one side of which—the side towards the street—is finely carved and richly ornamented; the other side, which looks to the backs of houses, is quite plain. So are the backs of the houses, and the two shabby uglinesses look at each other all day. A house is bad enough, but a church!

In Italy there is a church and in this church a statue sitting sideways. The side to the people is finely carved to the least

hair and the smallest button. But the side to the wall is just roughed out and left so.

Well, did it matter, after all? Listen to the end of this story. Years afterwards the artist was condemned to prison for forgery. Once again he had done a dishonest thing which he hoped "nobody would see." He cheated his conscience in his work, and he went on to cheat it in his life.

It is a fine thing to be "faithful in that which is least," for Jesus says, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."

In Rugby football there is what is called "the blind side of the scrum," where the referee cannot see what is being done. Some players think it is clever to do crooked things on the blind side of the scrum. Some think they can do foul things in the thick of the crowd. But they are seen.

I sat listening-in in Glasgow to a game, and suddenly a voice came through: "There's a man hurt; a very foul kick, a deliberate

kick!" The man was carried off, and the player who did it thought nobody saw; but it was seen, and on the moment I, away in Glasgow, was hearing of it, and thousands all over the kingdom.

You see, one can never be sure about anything that "nobody will see it." And you know there is nothing hidden from God. So the only way is to be faithful in that which is least, to have a conscience in one's work, and for one's own sake to put one's best into all we do, and, still more, to have a conscience towards God.

Only so can we have a quiet and easy mind, if we feel that there is nothing in our life and in our work we fear anyone seeing. It is how we do the things "that nobody sees" that makes us or mars us.

"Goodbye, Jim," said a wise and witty London vicar to his boy, who was going back to school, "good-bye! Remember to say your prayers and wash behind your ears." That is good advice!

"Ye say: The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel: Is not my way equal? Are not your ways unequal?"—*Ezek.* xviii. 25.

In an old book by an old man who loved old things and wrote about them in old England three hundred years ago, there is this story:

"Dr. Tye was a peevish and humoursome (touchy) man, especially in his latter days, and sometimes playing on ye Organ in ye chapel of Queen Elizabeth, which contained much musicke, but little delight to the ear, she would send ye verger to him to tell him he played out of tune: whereupon he sent word yt her eares were out of tune."

Who was Christopher Tye? He was choirmaster of Ely Cathedral, and afterwards vicar of a country parish, in the days of Queen Elizabeth. We are told that "he was a doctor of music, not skilful at preaching."

Well, one can't be skilful at everything, and perhaps he did a better thing when he

composed his music than when he wrote not very "skilful" sermons; for very few sermons live for four hundred years, but we have been singing the tunes of old Christopher Tye for four centuries, and the Christian Church will go on singing them for many a day yet.

It was very bold of him to tell Queen Elizabeth so bluntly that "her eares were out of tune," and he ran a good risk of having his own "eares" boxed by that very masterful lady; but it was good advice, all the same, both for her and for all of us.

We often think people and things are out of tune and all wrong, when it is our own ears that are out of tune. Take music itself. We are accustomed to certain sorts of music, certain sorts of tunes, and when anything new is given to us, we are ready to say, "It isn't music. There is no tune in it." We may be right, but it is worth while thinking whether perhaps we are wrong. Maybe our ears are not in tune, and we are missing something by not trying to tune them to this new music.

People have said such things about the greatest music in this world, and lived to find out that they were wrong. In Paris at first they hissed the wonderful music of *Tannhauser*. Now we wonder how they could have been so foolish. Yet we do the same thing.

One who writes about music has told how he heard the music of a Russian composer, and went away saying: "That is not music." Then he began to wonder if the fault was not in his own ears. He had all the pianoforte music of Scriabine played to him for a fortnight, and then, after a while, for another fortnight; and at the end he said: "This man is a great composer!" He had got his ears in tune.

It matters a good deal when we miss what is good in music because our ears are out of tune; but it matters a great deal more when we miss what is good in people because our *temper is out of tune*. That often happens.

In *David Copperfield* Dickens shows us Mrs. Gummidge. She was always miserable

and made everybody else miserable. She lived with the kindest of folk, but she said: "I'm a lone, lorn cretur, and things is contrairy with me." One day she made the great discovery that the "contrairiness" was not in "things," but in herself; her ears were out of tune, Then she became "the willingest, the trewest, the honestest helping woman that ever draw'd the breath of life." There are many Mrs. Gummidges in this world. There are people who come to a church and say that the church is very stiff and cold. Nobody speaks to them. They might think whether it isn't their own fault. To find friends one must be friendly.

It matters most of all when one is *out of tune with God:* when His commandments, His worship, His word don't attract us. To say "I don't like going to church" doesn't end the matter. Are God's words wrong, or are your ears at fault? What about trying to tune the ears of your soul, so that, when His word is heard, you will say, "That is great music?"

It takes patience and it takes pains;

but it is worth while. How foolish to have a splendid piano and not have it tuned regularly! It goes flat. It gives pain without pleasure. It perishes.

And you have a Soul meant to catch and give out the music of God's love, its keys meant to answer truly when He touches them and listens for the answer. But how often must He be disappointed, for some notes are dumb and some are false because it hasn't been kept in tune.

When God calls us to worship, He is saying: "Come, My children; let Me tune your soul, your mind, to My truth, your will to My commandments, your heart to My love, so that you will no longer grumble and complain that things are out of tune with you, but all your life will be 'one grand sweet song'."

OUR DEBT TO THE DUST

"Shall the dust praise Thee?"—*Psalm* xxx. 9.

Who has a good word to say for dust? It's just a nuisance as it whirls along streets and roads in summer, blinding our eyes, and dimming the fresh beauties of the hedgerows. In the house it is as bad, nesting on the tops of books, settling on everything, making work.

I wonder if anybody likes dusting! In the Bible, "dust" is a word of grief, and degradation, and ruin. When a man is humbled he is "brought down to the dust." When people mourn they "sit in the dust." Proud cities are turned to "dust and ashes"; and a psalm asks sadly, "shall the dust praise Thee?"

Yet the answer is "Yes." It does glorify God.

The dust is a good fairy all the while. It is like the Brownie, doing us rare service, and all the time unseen.

For one thing it helps us to see Light. The air is full of tiny particles, so small that we are not aware of them, but because they are there, not only do we see the sun as the source of light, not only do we see things on which the light falls, but the whole air is full of light. Were it not for these tiny particles, we would see the sun as a fiery ball in a black sky, and the world as a strange picture of intense white lights and black shadows. We would see the sun and things, but not Light. It is the invisible particles of dust which fill the air which makes light visible.

Not only do they make us see Light, but we have to thank the dust for the glorious colours of sunrise and sunset. The tiny particles split up the light, and refract the colours which make up light into a thousand different shades, so that sunrise and sunset are the wonderful colour-pictures we know and admire.

When the great volcano of Krakatoa was in eruption, it shot up a great quantity of fine dust high into the air. This drifted round the world, invisible in the high air

currents, and for four years there was a succession of the most wonderfully fine sunsets.

It was the dust that did it.

Also we have to thank the dust for the clouds. Without it we would have no clouds, and how much beauty would be gone from the world were the clouds gone. It is the dust which catches the moisture and condenses it into clouds, and builds fairy castles, and dream pictures, and weaves exquisite cloud-scapes in the sky, and not only rejoices our eye with beauty, but tempers the fierce heat of the sun for us.

We have to thank the dust for the gentleness of the rain from Heaven. The dust makes the rain-drops and gives us the rainbow. But for it, the water the sun sucks up would come down, not in diamond drops, but in terrific floods and crashing water-spouts, spreading death and destruction wherever they fell.

"Shall the dust praise Thee?"

Yes! Light, clouds, colour of sunrise and sunset, the rain, the rainbow—these are

the voices of its praise, and it is a beautiful chorus.

Isn't it all a parable of our life. Life has its big things, and it has its small dust; "little deeds of kindness, little words of love," all the myriad tiny things we think don't count at all. Yet it is these which can fill the air with love and light and beautiful colours, temper the glare, turn the floods of sorrow into the gentle rain that makes the harvest grow, and set a radiant rainbow of hope and promise over all.

Girls and boys, our lives are meant to show forth God's praise, but our praise will not be complete unless the dust of our life praises Him, and His love is made visible not only by great acts sometimes, but also, and always, by the little thoughts and words and acts of every day.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was made flesh."—*S. John* i. 1.

GIRLS and boys who are learning Latin at school know what is the Latin for "word." It is *verbum*, and we have cut off its tail and have taken it into our language as "verb."

We have all sorts of words—"parts of speech" we call them—and our grammar gives us names for them. A "noun" is the name of something; an "adjective" is a word added to a noun; a "preposition" is a word placed before a noun; and a "conjunction" is a word that joins words together. But there is one sort of word which has no name. It is too important. It doesn't need to be described. We just call it "*the* word," the "verb." It is the backbone of the whole business. Everything hangs on it—the word, the verb.

Now I am happy to say I haven't seen an English grammar for forty years, so I don't know what the grammars of to-day say; but

I can tell you what the old grammars said about the verb. I was glad to say goodbye to mine, for I hated it, as we hate lots of things that are good for us, and I laid it away with joy. But there was one thing it said which stuck to me, and which has come to mean more and more to me the longer I live. It was this: "A verb is a word which signifies to be, or to do, or to suffer."

When I put away my grammar I thought I was finished with learning the verbs, but I found, and you will find, that I have been learning these verbs all my life, and still haven't learned them perfectly, For life is not just getting things; it is learning "to be, to do, and to suffer." It is not what we have that is the important thing, but being and doing and suffering—what we *are*, what we *do* and how we *bear* what comes to us.

The Lord Jesus *had* nothing—nothing at all but the clothes He stood in—nothing like what you have. When He wanted a piece of money He had to say "Give me a penny." An old writer in Egypt seventeen hundred years ago says, "The Lord ate from

a cheap bowl, and made His disciples lie on the ground, on the grass, and He washed their feet with a towel about Him, the lowly-minded God and Lord of the Universe. He did not bring a silver footbath from heaven to carry about with Him. He asked the Samaritan woman to give him to drink in a vessel of clay as she drew from the well. He *had* nothing."

But He *is* the Saviour of the world and the high example to men, and His Name is above every name because of what He was, what He did, and what He suffered. He was the Word, the Verb of God, being, doing, and suffering.

He was pure and holy and good. He did works of truth and kindness. He suffered with men, for He took their sorrows on His heart and felt them as if they were His own, and He suffered for men, for He took their sins on His heart and bore them on His Cross.

He was God's Word, the Verb of God, the Word become Flesh, being, doing, suffering.

We have to learn the verb with Christ.

There words have to become flesh, to become alive in us. That is what life means. It will not be what we will bring in our hands, or have in our bank that will matter at the end of our life, but what we have in heart and conscience and character, what we have learned by being and doing and suffering.

We are to Be? Like Jesus. We are to Do? The things He asks. We are to Suffer? Not on that terrible Cross, but as He did among men, feeling for others, feeling through others, and taking their sorrows on our heart. That is what " sympathy " means ; not just feeling for others, but suffering with them.

Here is what a poet has written, looking back on his life, and it will be good if we, when we come to look back, can say the same :

" I have learnt ' to be '—well, a man :
How ' to do '—well, a part of my duty :
And in ' suffering,' own that the plan
Of the world is all goodness and beauty.
Still at times from the path I may stray.
And thus make the journeying rougher,
But at least I am learning the way
' To Be, and to Do, and to Suffer'."

Some of you will go to the University and by the things you learn there take a degree, and mayhap an honours degree and have letters after your name. Some of you won't. But all of you are entered in the Great University of Life and, by the things you learn there, have the chance of winning a degree and having at last "W.D.G.F.S." after your name.

Do you know what those letters mean? "Well Done, Good and Faithful Servant." It is the honours degree God gives to those who have followed Christ and with Him have learned the verbs "To Be," "To Do," and "To Suffer."

"The integrity of the upright shall guide them, but the perverseness of the transgressors shall destroy them."
Proverbs xi. 3.

I SUPPOSE most people have played at the game of Lines and Squares when they were young. Some of them often find themselves doing it yet. The great Dr. Johnson always did.

Does any one not know what it is? Why, it is this: when you go for a walk and find yourself walking on a pavement, you must be ever so careful to walk in the squares, and not on the lines between the stones. Because if you step in the squares nothing can happen to you, but if you step on the lines something will happen to you.

There is some difference as to what exactly will happen. I have consulted a number of authorities, people who know. Some were as old as ten—a great age!—and none were under five. One was sure that "Goblins'll git you." Another said, with a very serious face, that "if you step on the lines you'll go

through, and fall down and down and down for ever'n ever'n ever." But most agreed, with awe in their voices, that "bears'll eat you."

If you have read *When we were very Young*, you will remember a song about this:

"Whenever I walk in a London street
I'm ever so careful to watch my feet;
I walk on the squares, and the masses of bears
That wait round the corners all ready to eat
The sillies who walk on the lines of the street
Go back to their lairs, and I say to them 'Bears!
Just watch how I'm walking in all the squares'."

I wonder whether it was some wise old nurse who hit on this idea to get children to take good big steps and to watch their feet; or whether it was children themselves invented it to make life something like a fairy-tale, for in fairy-tales you are all right and can do anything *if* you don't do one certain thing.

I can't say which it was, but if it was the nurse she was a clever one, and if it was children they were very sensible.

There is quite a lot in it. There are lines in the Road of Life that we mustn't trample

on, just as there are white traffic lines on the roads, that we must keep inside. In the Bible God says, "Walk *in* my statutes," not "*on* My statutes"; and the word for "statutes" means a line. The Book of Proverbs says: "The integrity of the upright shall guide them, but the perverseness of the transgressors shall destroy them."

Now, the word which is translated "integrity" comes from a root which means "complete" or "whole," and the word which is translated "perverseness" is from a root which means "to join together."

So here is something like your game of Squares and Lines in the Bible itself. We are to be in all things "on the square," as we say. If we are not, if we set our foot on the lines which God and man have set, there will be trouble for us.

But is this true? Of course it is. In the Bible we read of some children who stepped on the lines of reverence for old age and called impudent names at Elisha, and, in fact, bears did get them—she-bears, too, which are the worst sort!

Dr. Johnson took care not to step on the lines on the pavement, but he trod heavily on other lines, on all the rules of courtesy and patience and politeness, and people said he was an old bear himself; and so he was, often. And to be a bear is worse than to be eaten by bears. Always if one tramples on the commandments of God, there is some ugly result, beastly habits, bestial tempers, savage passions, animal desires get hold of us.

So long as the lines and squares are only on the street pavements it is a capital game; but when the lines are the commandments of God and the rules He has ruled to guide our feet in the way of life, then it is a matter of Life and Death for us to respect God's laws and set our feet in His Statutes. "Ponder the path of thy feet," says the Wise Man in the Book of Proverbs. If you walk in God's statutes you can walk without fear. Always and at any cost, be "on the square."

A SERMON IN A SALAD

"Our Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him."— *S. Matthew* vi. 8.

I WONDER how many girls and boys have heard of Kepler. "Oh!" you say, "Kepler's Extract of Malt! I should think we have heard of him, and we don't want to hear any more of him!" No, it's not that Kepler. I am not surprised that you don't want to hear about the "Extract of Malt" gentleman, although his Extract did you a lot of good. I would as soon expect you to be interested in Scott who made the "Emulsion of Cod Liver Oil." Ugh!

But this is Johann Kepler. He lived three hundred years ago, and next year all the papers will have articles about him, for 1930 will be the tercentenary of his death. He was a great astronomer and discovered the laws by which the planets move, and many other wonderful things. Now to the story? He tells it himself:

"Yesterday, when weary with writing, and my mind quite cloudy with considering these atoms, I was called to supper, and a salad which I had asked for was set before me. 'It seems, then,' said I aloud, 'that if pewter dishes, leaves of lettuce, grains of salt, drops of vinegar and oil, and slices of eggs, had been floating about in the air from all eternity, it might at last happen by chance that these come a salad.' 'May be,' says my wife, 'but not so nice and well-dressed as this of mine is!'"

Of course Kepler was only joking; but what he said in jest many people say in earnest and think they are very wise. They think our world and all that is in it, and all the other countless worlds just happened. Topsy in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, when she was asked, "Who made you?" said, "I dunno, 'specs I growed." So some people think our world "just growed." Atoms were floating and whirling about in space and somehow at last they came together and our world began to be. It didn't need a Creator; it "growed" itself.

And so they have no thought of God. They do not wonder and worship and give thanks. They take it all for granted.

Some girls and boys do just the same with the little world in which they live: I mean the world of house and home. It's there, and they just take it all for granted. Of *course* it's there. Of course there will be food on the table; of course there will be new clothes when old ones are done; and stockings will go on getting mended. It's all quite natural and very nice. It's all a matter of course, and it will just go on as a matter of course.

I remember once telling my little girl that we couldn't get something she thought it would be nice for us to have. "Why not?" "No money." "But you can go to the bank and get money." It was all very simple. Banks were there to hand out money and father's only task was to go and ask for it!

But, you know, it's not so easy and simple as that at home. Things don't happen; they have got to be contrived and planned, and made to happen. Buttons don't sew themselves

on. Torn clothes don't mend themselves. Soiled clothes don't gather themselves into a bag and check themselves off in a book and trot off to the laundry. The food-stuffs in the cupboards don't hold a general meeting and appoint sub-committees to form themselves into soups and pies and puddings, so that the children may be fed. That may happen in fairy tales, but we do not live in Fairy Land. All these things have got to be thought out and planned and done by somebody. Father must work to provide; Mother must think and plan. It wouldn't all be there and it couldn't all be so nice if there was not Love behind it all. Things never make themselves. You can't get a picture by gathering together canvas and colours and brushes and glue and wood and waiting for a picture to happen of itself. It needs an artist. Lettuce and radish and eggs, etc., might lie side by side for ages and ages but never would they say to each other, "Go to, let us arise and make ourselves into a salad." It needs a cook.

We talk about things "turning out"

happily. But things don't turn out, not even puddings; they've got to be turned out by somebody. Behind all beautiful things is some one who loves beauty. Behind all the comfort and smoothness and certainty of our homes there is some one who "knows what we have need of before we ask it;" her name is Mother; and behind all that makes these things possible is one who works to provide; his name is Father; and the power that lives and moves in them is Love. So behind all the beauty of the world is One who loves beauty, and whose hand paints the loveliness of the butterfly and sets the colours in a bird's wing, and the glory on the lilies of the field. Behind all the bounty of the world by which we are fed and our daily bread is provided and harvest never fails, is One who "knoweth what we have need of before we ask him."

Behind all that we call "chance" is One who foresees all things and makes them do His will, and joy and sorrow, sunshine and shadow, life and death, are the servants of His gracious will. His name is God, and all

the love that we mean when we say "Father and Mother," is but the shadow of His love, whom Jesus taught us to call our Heavenly Father.

No! things don't happen of themselves, not even a salad. They are planned by Love; and if ever you think that perhaps this world just came to be, without a Heavenly Father's thought and love, remember the words of Kepler's wife—who not only put the ordinary things into his salad, but also love and a spice of sacred sense: "May be, but not so nice and well-dressed as this of mine is."

A HOLY PLACE OF REMEMBRANCE

"Thou shalt remember."—*Dt.* viii. 2.

"They may forget, yet will I not forget thee."—*Is.* xlix. 15.

WHEN November comes round, it brings Armistice Day, a solemn day of remembrance. People's thoughts go away on pilgrimage, to graves at home and graves beyond the seas, and to places where the sea itself is the grave, where brave men lie who gave their lives for us all. In these short minutes of silence, how far our thoughts can go! We are remembering, and praying that we may never forget.

I want your fancy to take you where a great many folk's feet will be taking them on Armistice Day—to Scotland's National Memorial in Edinburgh Castle. It is a long climb up, easier to fancy than to foot, up the Mound, up the old High Street, up the Esplanade, up the winding way through all the Castle gates till at last you reach the

highest point of the city. There stands the National Memorial.

Every village has its monument to its own brave men; every regiment has its own; every church has its own; but here is something that gathers them altogether. It is the nation's memorial. From the height of the Castle the views are fair and far, whichever way you look, but this has added another view, fairer and farther than any, for the eyes of the soul to see, and has made the summit of the old rock a high place of sacred remembrance.

It is a wonderful work, beautifully thought out and lovingly wrought out by skilled hands. Old stones, grey with the years, and new stones freshly chiselled, tell us that this is part of the heroic history of our beloved Scotland. Every sort of service is remembered and finds its place upon the walls. Even the beasts are not forgotten, even the mice and canaries who helped, not knowing, in mine and submarine, are there, "the miner's friends."

You go into a long and stately hall with a great company of people who tread softly and

talk quietly. Each regiment has a panel which tells of its battles and its losses, and before each is a book in which the names of those who fell are written, and every book has some sad searcher looking to see if some dear name is there, and greatly comforted when they find it.

Then you go into an inner shrine. Round the walls are wrought in bronze figures of every sort of service of men and women by sea and land and air. In the centre the living rock of the Castle juts up through the floor and on it stands a block of green marble. On its corners are four kneeling angels, kneeling towards a great steel casket, the gift of the King, in which locked for ever are all the names of Scotland's honoured dead.

That Castle-rock made Edinburgh possible. It was her shelter and strength all down her history, and so on that rock stands the casket, to tell every one that in the heart of the nation there is preserved and cherished for ever a sacred remembrance, strong as steel and steady as the eternal rock.

It makes me think of another city, the City

of God, which our faith looks to, which is founded on the rock of the eternal promises of God Himself, which cannot be shaken, and in the heart of which our names are held in remembrance by that great love of God which is stronger than the strongest steel, and which will never forget. "Can a mother forget her child?" says God; "yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands." "Rejoice," said Jesus to His disciples, "rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

In the heart of the old city this sacred memory enshrined for ever; and in the heart of God is a love which remembers all His children with a love which will not let us go.

I think there should be something like this shrine in our hearts. Our faith is built on the Rock of Ages. Our lives must be built in the shelter of it, as Edinburgh was built on the long ridge the rock made possible, and in the shelter of the Castle which kept the city safe. And in our hearts, grasped and held as with hands of steel, should be enshrined the memory of what Jesus did for

us: for if our bodies are the children of our soldiers' and sailors' sacrifice, our souls are the children of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and we are not our own.

It is good for us to remember the men and women who gave their lives for us; good to go up often to the high place of remembrance in the old Castle, and look out not only with the outward eye on the waters of Forth and the hills of Fife, but also with the inward eye on the fields of France and the oceans of earth where others paid the price of our peace. But it is best to go up often in worship and prayer to the high place of the soul's remembrance, and bow before the Cross of Christ.

Remembering that is the secret of loving service, glad worship and good life.

"Ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price."
1 *Cor.* vi. 19, 20.

"It's my very own!" How often has every boy and girl said that?

And how often have you gone on to say: "And I can do what I like with my own?"

But there are very few things that are our own to do what we like with.

When you come to have a house, you will find you can't do what you like with it: the city has something to say, and its leave must be asked. When you have an income, the city will take some and the country will take some more. A father can't do what he likes with his children: the law has something to say. All sorts of people and things will make demands upon your time, and your money.

Is there anything we can call truly "our own?"

"Well," you say, "surely I myself am my own."

That is the biggest mistake of all, and surely no one will make it now after all the sacrifice of the Great War; for if there is one thing it makes us feel it is just this, that "we are not our own"; our homes, our country, our lives have been bought with a price, and the sailors and soldiers paid that price in their own bodies.

We have some idea of the price our soldiers paid, for we have heard many stories of their bravery and sacrifice; but we haven't heard so much of the price the sailors paid.

Now that the fighting is done, things can be told that had to be kept secret before, and I want to tell you one story which shows one little bit of the price at which the sailors bought peace and life for us.

After the battle of Jutland a V.C. was given to a certain Major of Marines on the "Lion." He was killed in the battle, and only now do we know why the V.C. was given.

He was in charge of a magazine under one of the big gun turrets, and a shell penetrated the turret and burst, killing most of the gun crew.

The flash of the shell passed down the open ammunition hoist to the magazine where the cordite was stored, and set it on fire. The Major, badly wounded, knew that in a little space of time, unless the magazine was flooded, the flagship would be blown up, and Admiral Beatty and all his crew, as had happened to the "Queen Mary" already. So without hesitating he gave the orders to close the doors and let in the sea. No man hesitated. They did not count their lives their own. They belonged to the ship, to our country, to our cause, not to themselves.

So these brave men closed the iron doors and opened the sea-cocks, and sentenced themselves to death, *for they had to remain inside.*

So they died, and so the "Lion," the flagship of the fleet, was saved, because they did not count their lives their own.

That is part of the price which has been paid on land and sea and in the air, and which forbids us ever again to say we are our own.

We are the children of sacrifice and must be worthy of it; and we must have the same

spirit in us, the spirit which holds its life for others, and for our country, and for things our sailors and soldiers died for.

How shall we get that spirit?

By reading and remembering all the stories of our brave men. That will help. But best of all is to get it where St. Paul got it when he wrote, "Ye are not your own: ye are bought with a price." He got it from Jesus Who gave His life for us all on the Cross that we might have life and freedom from sin, and forgiveness with God.

Behind all our happiness and all our hopes, there lies the sacrifice of Jesus Who counted not His life His own; Who didn't keep His heavenly peace to Himself as His own, but gave it up to come down to earth and die for us.

"There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin."

We are all anxious to do all we can to show our gratitude to our sailors and soldiers.

What shall we do to show our gratitude

to Jesus? Give Him something, or give Him ourselves?

Once when the pupils of Socrates were giving him presents according to custom, one pupil remained to the last, looking shy and downcast, for he was poor and had nothing to give.

When Socrates turned to him, his face lighted up, and he said: "Master, I have nothing to give. I give thee myself."

It was this gift which made the master's heart most glad.

It is this gift we must give to Jesus, "Who bought us with His own blood"; not something, but ourselves, for "we are not our own: we are bought with a price."

"I upon Thee all the day,
Expecting do attend."
Ps. xxv. 5. (*Metrical version.*)

If the question were asked, "What is the dullest place in the world?" I think the answer that would get full marks would be, "A waiting-room at a railway station." A dull room, with a dull dispirited fire, dull featureless walls, and folk sitting about with dull faces!

The hardest task of all is to wait. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick," says the Bible, and it is true. It is difficult to wait and keep up courage. Any soldier will tell you that the sorest test of courage was not going over the top and facing death, but standing still waiting for the signal to go.

Now the Bible has a great deal to say about waiting, and it tells us the secret that makes waiting not so difficult and not at all dull: it is to wait, *expecting*.

"My soul wait thou with patience
Upon thy God alone.
On Him dependeth all my hope
And expectation."

"And I upon Thee all the day,
Expecting do attend."

Waiting is not dull, if you are expecting someone. People fall asleep in waiting-rooms because they are just waiting for a train to take them somewhere, but the people who are waiting for a train that is bringing someone to them aren't dull. They aren't in the waiting-room, and they aren't asleep. No fear! They are on the platform, walking up and down alertly, watching the signal for the sign of the train's approach. When it comes in, their eyes search eagerly for the beloved face, and when their friend is found and says, "Had you long to wait?" the answer is, "No! the time passed ever so quickly." They were waiting "with expectation."

I have watched a crowd of children waiting for the curtain to rise on "Peter Pan." They weren't dull. They didn't want

newspapers or any device for killing time. They didn't yawn. They watched with eager faces. They were expecting to see their friend Peter Pan, and I tell you when the curtain did go up, it didn't catch anyone looking the other way.

They had all been in a fidget to be there in good time, and when they got there and Mother said, "Now, you see! I told you we would have ever so long to wait," they had answered cheerily, "It doesn't matter." And it didn't. It is easy waiting for someone worth waiting for.

How long the crowd waits at Twickenham for an International! But what a cheery crowd it is! They, too, are waiting "with expectation," expecting something big, and willing to wait for it, laughing, chatting, joking, but always watching the gap where the teams will appear.

Expecting is the secret of waiting. Jesus tells us several parables of people who stopped expecting and so made a mess of the task of waiting: servants who said, "My lord delayeth his coming," and gave

up looking for him, and did evil: women that got tired of waiting for the bridegroom, and fell asleep.

But people who expect are not caught by surprise, nor are they blind when what they are expecting happens.

They were people who "waited for the Kingdom of God," like Simeon and Joseph of Arimathea. In a way all the Jews were "waiting for the Kingdom." It was their religion; but many didn't really expect it. And so when it came, in the living person of Jesus, they didn't recognize it, but Joseph and Simeon did. They waited "with expectation."

We have to wait upon God and we have to wait *expecting*. When in prayer we are to expect an answer. It may not be just the answer we would like, but it will be good, for God knows best. The point is, you are to expect that your prayers will be answered. Prayers that don't expect, aren't answered. Why should they be?

When you come to Church you must come, not just because it is a good custom,

but as one that comes to wait for a friend who has promised to come. When the bells ring, you will remember Christ promised to be present, and you will say, "I expect He will and I must be there to meet Him."

"Great Expectations" is the title of a story by Charles Dickens. It is the story of a boy whose expectations didn't come true because they were not great.

I would like it to be the true title of the life of every boy and girl who reads this page: "Great Expectations!" Expect the best of everybody, as Jesus did. He expected from people from whom everybody else had ceased to expect anything. He helped them by His expectations.

Expect that God will answer your prayers, and go on praying with high expectation.

Expect that Christ will be present among His disciples when they wait upon Him in the Church's meetings. Wait upon God, expecting, and you will find that you don't get tired. You renew your strength.

THE VOICE OF JESUS

"The sheep follow Him, for they know His voice."
S. John x. 4.

THE voice of Jesus is often mentioned in the Gospels. People were struck not only by what He said, but by how He said it. A preacher's voice is part of his message. We have the words of Jesus, but oh! if we could only have heard His voice speaking them! "I wish," says the hymn we have so often sung:

> "That I could have heard His kind voice
> when He said,
> Let the little ones come unto Me."

Nowadays, records are made, and we can hear the very voices of speakers and singers long after they are dead. But there is no record of the voice of Jesus.

Yet the gospels tell us a good deal about it.

It must have been a very *quiet voice*, other voices sound in the Gospels, and people

felt the contrast between His voice and these. There are voices of pain: the two blind men at Capernaum "shout." There are voices of panic: the disciples in the storm "cried out for fear." The crowd before Pilate "yelled" "Crucify Him." Blind Bartimæus at Jericho "shouts;" the lepers "lift up their voices."

Jesus "cried" once: it is never said He "shouted." It was so striking that they recalled an old prophecy, which said, "He shall not cry aloud, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street," and said, "This is He. It fits Jesus of Nazareth."

Only twice did He raise his voice: at the grave of Lazarus, when He cried in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth"; and on the Cross when "He called with a great voice." At all other times He spoke quietly.

There is a wonderful charm about a gentle voice. The song says of Annie Laurie:

> "Like winds in Summer sighing
> Her voice is low and sweet."

King Lear says about Cordelia:

> "Her voice was ever soft,
> Gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman."

It is an excellent thing in anybody. Noise is no argument. Truth doesn't need noise to help it: it gets in better through broken hearts than through broken ears. Jesus was the Truth and He spoke quietly.

He learned that from His Father. God is very sparing of His Thunder. His world of Nature is full of quietness. It is men and cities that make a din: the country, the moors, the hills, are full of peace.

When God spoke to Elijah it was by "a still, small, voice"; and when Jesus came to reveal God to men His voice was gentle.

But it was *Powerful.* Its quietness was the quietness, not of weakness, but of Power. It is the man with a weak case that feels he needs to shout and bawl; the man with a strong case can afford to be quiet. The

quiet voice of Jesus struck men with its accents of authority. The officers of the High Priest said, "Never man spake like this man." The people who heard his Sermon on the Mount said, "He speaks with authority."

His voice had power to command the storm. It had power to quiet crazed minds; to banish the darkness that was about the blind, and break the silence that was about the deaf.

It could give power, and make the impotent strong and the crippled and the paralyzed able to stand and walk.

Better still, it had power to win, so that, passing some fishermen mending their nets, He could say "Follow me," and there was something in His voice that made them "leave all and follow Him."

Besides all that, it was a very *cheerful* voice. It left downcast folk cheered up, and sad folk brighter. He was always saying, "Be of good cheer," and I'm sure He said it cheerfully.

To the frightened disciples in the storm,

He said, "Be of good cheer, it is I." To the anxious folk He said, "Be of good cheer. Your Heavenly Father knoweth." To sorrowful, shamed penitent sinners He said, "Be of good cheer: your sins are forgiven."

Everywhere His voice sounded cheerily and left people cheered.

Lastly, it was a *carrying* voice. How far it carried! Our voices cannot reach the dead: His voice did. It went through the gates of Death to the daughter of Jairus, to the son of the widow of Nain, and to His friend Lazarus. They had heard all the voices of their loved ones fade out of hearing and a great silence wrap them round, and then strangely, wonderfully, His voice pierced the silence and said, "Little maid, arise"; "Young man, I say unto thee arise"; "Lazarus, come forth."

Is there any limit to the voice of Jesus?

Time sets none. Other voices once loud and listened to, are now faint and forgotten: but not the voice of Jesus. His words are living words. Peter said so long ago and they are alive still to-day.

In the beginning by the Lake of Galilee, He called the disciples to follow Him, and all down the ages His voice has sounded, "saying, Christian, follow Me." Saul of Tarsus, St. Columba, St. Francis, Livingstone, all heard His voice. Quiet, powerful, far-reaching, it still calls us if we will only hear it.

Space sets no limit. Our voices go only a little way: even with "wireless" to help us we reach our limit; but the voice of Jesus has gone to the ends of the earth.

There is only one limit: our willingness to listen. To listen to the voice of Jesus is what the world needs, and what we need. His voice still gives life to the dead.

But you say, "We aren't dead: we *are* alive." Are you? Are you as alive to God as Jesus was? Is there no good thing in our lives that has died and that you would like brought to life again? Is there not some good waiting to be born in you? Are there no withered arms that cannot serve, and slack hands that have forgotten to fold themselves in prayer?

We can't help ourselves any more than

dead Lazarus could: only the voice of Jesus can help us. Only the voice of Jesus can waken into life the Sleeping Beauty, the Slumbering Hero, in your soul.

"Hear and your soul shall live."

"Ahab said to Naboth: Give me your vineyard that I may make it a vegetable garden . . . I will give you a better vineyard in place of it, or, if you prefer it, I will give you its value in money."—1 *Kings* xxi. 2. (*Moffatt's Translation.*)

This is a story of long ago: the story of the stupid King, the wicked Queen, and the brave, poor man Naboth.

Ahab thought he could buy anything if he paid enough money: that there was nothing that a man wouldn't sell. Or if Naboth's heart was set on having a vineyard rather than money, Ahab would give him a better vineyard. Besides it would be a public improvement to turn a vineyard into a vegetable garden. A vineyard is only beautiful, but a vegetable garden is useful. It produces good wholesome vegetables. A vineyard feeds the eye, but a vegetable garden fills the stomach.

So Ahab thought he was generous and progressive, and covered over with fine words the fact that he was just selfish and greedy.

Naboth looked at things in quite a different way. His vineyard was his inheritance from his fathers. It was full of memories. His father and mother used to sit there while he played about them as a little boy. Every bit of it was dear to him. Ahab could give him a bigger vineyard, but not a better. It meant for him things that no money could buy, and which no money could replace.

Besides it wasn't his own: it was God's. The law of his religion forbade him to sell it. And so with the thought of God, and the memory of his father, in his heart, he said to Ahab, "God forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to thee."

Ahab couldn't understand it at all. He couldn't believe that any man would miss the chance of turning something into money. He was sure that vegetables were better than vines. A great Frenchman has said about Dean Swift, who wrote "Gulliver's Travels," "in forests he saw only firewood, and in the fields sacks of corn." Ahab was like that.

It is not only a story of long ago: it is a story of to-day. We also are asked to prefer

vegetables to vines, and to turn our vineyards into kitchen gardens. What I mean is this: vegetables stand for what is dull, and comfortable, and stodgy, without any poetry or beauty, or inspiration, or sacrifice. There is nothing inspiring about vegetables. They are useful, but dull. The Bible says very little about them, but I remember that the Israelites in the desert got tired of manna, though it was heavenly food, and said "we remember the cucumbers, and the melons, the leeks, and onions, and garlic." I remember that Esau sold his birthright for a "pottage of lentils." They exchanged their vines for vegetables and it was a bad exchange.

There is a "language of flowers" and we can say nice things with flowers, but what can you say with vegetables. There is a song "Say it with flowers," but who ever thought of writing a song "Say it with vegetables"?

It is not a compliment to be called "a turnip," or a "cabbage-head." When we say that a man is a "mere vegetable," we mean that he has no spirit in him, no ad-

venture, no interest in fine things: that, in fact, he is stupid and dull and stodgy.

But the vine stands for the things that inspire: for generosity, and warm-heartedness, and sacrifice.

It means something more in the Bible. "Israel is a noble vine." "The house of Israel is the vineyard of the Lord." Jesus speaks of the world as God's vineyard, and in the Upper Room, He said, "I am the true vine," and He took the red wine in His cup and said it was the symbol of His sacrifice.

> "The Living Vine. Christ chose it for Himself:
> The everlasting, ever-quickening Vine,
> That gives the heart and passion of the world
> Through its own life-blood, still renewed and shed."

So the vine stands for the splendid things of love and sacrifice, the things that no money can ever buy, and no money can ever replace.

Now, do you see what I mean when I say we are tempted to turn our vineyard into a vegetable garden, and think it an improvement, to make some bare exchange

of the best for something less than the best?

In 1914 Germany asked the King of Belgium to let him turn his country into a road to invade France. He would give him it back afterwards and pay him. The King of Belgium said "No," and all the world honoured him.

God has given us the vineyard of the Lord's Day. What are we doing with it? It is meant to be a quiet place where the flowers of the soul get peace to grow, where we shall rest, and worship, and get nearer to Jesus Christ. Along comes Ahab and wants us to change it into a week-day; shops are to be open, theatres are to be open: they will get money by it. It is to be a day of pleasure, and sport, and amusement. It'll be far better so. That is just the choice between vines and vegetables. No money can make up for what we will lose. God forbid that we should give away the inheritance of our fathers, and betray the trust God has given us.

What about the vineyard of your own heart? Are you keeping it pure? "Thou

shalt not sow thy vineyard with mixed seeds," says the Bible. Some turn it into a dancing-floor, and fill it with noise and excitement, and some turn it into a counting-house and money is its lord and master. Some give it up to clothes, and conceit.

What are you doing with the vineyard of your heart? Are you growing the stodgy, selfish, stupid, vegetable things, or are the love of God, and loyalty to Christ, unselfishness, generosity, and sacrifice its fine vintage?

Vines? or vegetables? Which is it to be?

CHRIST KNOCKING AT THE DOOR

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock."—*Rev.* iii. 20.

When anyone knocks at the door, you can tell something about them by the way they knock, and sometimes you can even guess who they are. There can be a good deal of character in a knock. There is the knock that belongs to authority, the knock of the law, the policeman's knock, firm and measured, and strong, that makes the wrong-doer's heart leap to his mouth. There is the postman's knock, a brisk, cheerful rat-tat, that speaks of haste. There is the shy, timid knock of the boy that has been sent to the headmaster's room, who knocks because he has to, but hopes his knock won't be heard. All sorts of knocks come to our doors, and they all have their own character.

So, too, with the knocks at the door of our heart. All sorts come knocking for admittance, asking us to open and let them in. Pleasure and passion, sacrifice and selfishness,

good and evil, friendship and love—each knocks in turn. And Jesus Christ is one of them. He says, "I stand at the door and knock."

How are you to recognize His knock?

I think first of all by its *gentleness*. The gentleness of God is one of wonderful words of his Bible. No other sacred book ever thought of it. The power of God is a natural thought: He is the Almighty, but that the Almighty is also the All-gentle is the wonderful thing. The gentleness of a mother's hand is beautiful, but one expects it: but to see strong hands, hands perhaps hard with swinging heavy hammers, handling gently and tenderly a little sick child, makes us wonder. The gentleness of power is always wonderful: the greater the power the greater the wonder; and the greatest wonder of all is the gentleness of God.

He created all things. We look at the mighty mountains and we think of His power; then we look at the tiny things of creation and we think of His gentleness. How mighty the hand that set the starry worlds

in their courses! How gentle the hand that painted a butterfly's wing. The power that made the mammoth was tender enough to make the humming-bird! You and I can tear open a bud, and spoil it; but God woos it to open by the whisper of the wind and the caress of the sunlight, and it makes a flower.

And His way with man is the same; there is more of gentleness than of mighty judgments in it. The Old Testament speaks of Him as wooing His people, as a father teaching a little one to walk, as a shepherd setting a slow pace for the mother sheep, and carrying the wee tired lambs. It is all the gentleness of God.

It is the same with Jesus. I know that He was strong; that angry crowds flinched before Him, and armed men fell backwards when He looked at them. But I am glad to remember that He was, and is, the "gentle Jesus," who spoke quietly, and was very tender to sorrowful folk, and very gentle and encouraging to folk that were ashamed.

So when He says, "I stand at the door

and knock," I recognize the same Jesus and the same gentleness of God.

He might have commanded entry, for it is not Jesus in His weakness, but the King of Glory that knocks. He might have summoned us to surrender by a terrible trumpet blast of doom; but because He is the gentle Jesus, He only knocks, and we know His knock by its gentleness.

We can know it, too, by its *persistence*. His words really mean: "I have taken up my stand at the door and am knocking."

Others knock at our heart, and pass on impatient if we do not open at once, but He goes on knocking and waiting. When love and joy, sorrow or trial, come to us, Christ is knocking at our heart, and in a thousand other ways. We are stupid and don't hear; and we are stubborn and won't hear; but still He persists with a love which won't give us up and a patience that won't give in.

One other thing is suggested by Christ's knock. It is that He is *very near*.

When anyone knocks at my door I know

that there is very little between me and him, only the thickness of the door, and that is gone when I say "Come in," or rise up and open the door.

When someone telephones you, you say, "Where are you speaking from?" but when he knocks, you don't ask, for you know. He is very near, and when you open, friends are together.

Girls and boys, if Jesus knocks at the door of your heart, He is very near, nearer even than if He were knocking at the door of your room.

In some working-class towns they still have "knockers-up"—people who go round and rat-tat on the doors so that no one shall sleep in and miss the beginning of the day's work.

There are no hearts at which Christ has not knocked. Some haven't heard because the clatter of their life drowned the knock and they didn't hear. Some have been the deaf who wouldn't hear. Some have been like the selfish man in the parable who said, "I am in bed and I cannot rise and give unto

thee"—in bed, wrapped round with the bed-clothes of selfish comfort. But no one who has missed the morning of life has been able to say, "I wasn't called."

Jesus is calling you, knocking at the door of your heart in the fresh, fair morning of your life; won't you open the door and let Him in? It is so easy to do, easier now than it will ever be, and it is so well worth while.

"When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: We have done that which was our duty to do."—*S. Luke* xvii. 10.

"DUTY" is a word that we like to print with a large capital letter, and say in a very solemn voice. We talk of it as something splendid and magnificient. To do our duty is a noble aim; to have always done our duty is a noble record.

Yet Jesus says, when we have done our duty we should say, "we are unprofitable servants; we have only done what it was our duty to do."

Now that is exactly what we do say. When a man has done some brave act, risking his life to save another, and he is praised for it he says, "I only did my duty." Somehow or other, we feel that duty doesn't deserve praise; it's just what ought to be.

What does this mean? "Duty" and "debt" are the same word. What we "ought" is what we "owe." Duty is

only paying our debts. If we don't pay our debts we are failures; if we won't pay our debts, we are frauds. It is told that a man from Aberdeen received his change at a booking office, and stood looking at it with a very dissatisfied face. "What's the matter?" said the clerk, "isn't your change right?" "Ay!" was the answer, "but it's only jist right."

That is what Jesus says about duty: it's only just right. If we only salute those who salute us, if we only love those who love us, we are only paying back what we have received. Jesus says anybody does that, even sinners and heathens: it's only natural. And He says to His disciples, "What do ye more than others."

If we are to be Christians, we must do more. We must do more than our bare duty. In His day, the law compelled anyone to go a mile with a soldier to show him the road. "Well," Jesus says, "that is your duty; do it. But don't stop there. When you have gone a mile because duty demands it, go another mile. Add a friendly mile

to the dutiful mile." He wants us always to do something more and He says it is just this doing "something more" that marks those who are the children of God. We must not just think of our duty, but do our best; we must not be content with what we think is our share, but do as much as we can. We are to be just, but more than that we are to be generous; not only correct but kind; not only dutiful, but devoted. Duty can be measured; devotion knows no measure. We can draw a line and say, "I've done my duty"; but devotion never draws the line, love sets no limit to loving. Men who work for a wage have an eight-hour day, and stop when the hours are up; but mother's work is never done, because it is the devotion of love that is behind her work.

So, like Nelson, Jesus expects us to do our duty; to pay back love for love and kindness for kindness. But He asks us to go beyond and do more; to love our enemies, to do things we get no thanks for doing, and go on doing them; and to do this is to belong to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Why? Because it is God's way. "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities," says a psalm. He might have, but He is merciful and gracious. He doesn't measure His gifts by our deserving. His sun shines on the just man's garden, and on the garden of the unjust, too. He doesn't hold back the blessing of the rain because people are unthankful. He has always given us more than we deserved. He doesn't measure His mercies, but gives a cup that overflows, full to the brim and splashing over. That is God's way. It is the way of love, and God is Love.

It is Christ's way. St. Paul says, "Scarcely for a righteous man would anyone die; but perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die"—that is the farthest limit of duty; dying for a good man because he is a good man and worth dying for. "But," he goes on, "God commends His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us," when we weren't worth dying for. That is Christ's way. And it must be our

way, if we are to be God's children and Christ's disciples.

I know a man, a very good man, a very big man. He has a big heart, in an enormous body. I once heard him tell how he found himself stranded at a little Highland station, with two hours to wait for his connection. It was one of those little stations with about three trains in the day, where the staff lock up the office and go home and dig their gardens between whiles. A dull place to wait in.

He read all the advertisements, and wondered what to do next to pass the time. There was a weighing machine there, so he said to himself, "I will weigh myself." He put in the penny and stepped on to the plate; but he stepped off as wise as when he stepped on. For the handle went round, and round, and round, until it had gone quite round. Then it had to stop. It didn't want to; it would have liked to go further, but it couldn't!

Well, that is just the spirit Jesus wants to see in us; the spirit that does all it ought,

all it can, and still wishes it could do more; not saying, "I'll do my duty and I'll do no more," but "I'll do my very best. I'll give, not just what I think my share, but as much as I can"; that is not content with "what'll do," or what is "good enough," but reaches out for an honours degree.

That is the spirit of the Cross of Christ, of Christ's love unmeasured and His sacrifice uncounted; to do, to give, to be, our best, for Christ's sake, who loved us and gave Himself for us.

"Remember thy Creator now, in the days of thy youth."
Eccles. xi. 1.

LATELY I was back in London. I hadn't been there for a long time, and like everybody else I was interested to see the whirl and rush of the traffic, and the way the policemen tackled it.

I got into a familiar bus on a route I remembered well. Off we went and bowled along. Suddenly we swung off to the left and went down a lot of side roads, and at last re-joined the main road. I asked the conductor, "Why? Is the road up?" "No," he said, "it's a one-way street."

You know what a "one-way street" is? You can only go along it one way. Once you are in it, you must go on to the end. There is no turning back.

Life is a kind of one-way street. You must go on and keep going on; from childhood to boyhood, from boyhood to manhood,

from manhood to old-age, and so out at the other end which is called death. Often we would like to go back, and do something we left undone, pick up something we let drop carelessly; but it cannot be. Yesterday is past, and past for ever. In Shakespeare's play of Richard II, the Earl of Salisbury says to the King:

> "One day too late, I fear me, noble lord,
> Hath clouded all thy happy days on earth:
> O call back yesterday, bid time return,
> And thou shall have twelve-thousand fighting men!
> To-day, to-day, unhappy day, too late,
> O'erthrows thy joys, friends, fortune and thy state."

People would often like to call back yesterday, but it can't be done. In the beginning of the Bible story, we see Adam and Eve wanting to go back to the Eden they had lost by their sin, but an angel with a sword of flame kept the gate. There was no going back. They couldn't go back and start again; they had to make a new start where they were and everything was harder.

That is the Bible telling us in the very beginning that life is one-way street.

Job cries out, "Oh! that I were as in days past! When the secret of God was on the roof of my tent." He, too, wanted to bid Time return, but Time didn't hear him.

Robert Louis Stevenson has a sad little song, which begins:

> "Sing me a song of a lad that is gone.
> Say, could that lad be I?
> Merry of heart he sailed on a day,
> Over the sea to Skye."

He remembers the sunshine and the sea, all that filled his eyes, and all that rejoiced his heart. And then this is how it ends:

> "Give me again all that was there,
> Give me the sun that shone,
> Give me the eyes, give the soul,
> Give me the lad that is gone."

But the lad that was gone, was gone for good, only the man remained, and because the lad hadn't been, and hadn't done, all that he had the chance to be and to do, the

man was sad. He'd have liked to go back, but he couldn't; he was in one-way street. Do you remember how Peter Pan flew away out of the nursery window into Kensington Gardens? He flew away with an easy mind, for he thought he could go back whenever he liked. But when at last he did try to go back, he found the window closed and iron bars on it. What a glorious boy he had meant to be to his mother! "Ah! Peter," says the book," we who have made the great mistake, how differently we should act at the second chance."

A lot of people are like that, they would give anything to go back. They think upon what they might have been, if they hadn't missed their chance. But they did miss it and they can't go back and so they can only give God what is left of their life. They might have given Him their first unspoiled love in the beginning. They have come to God, but they wish they had come sooner, and not brought just the remnant of their life to Him. "Might have been" are sad words.

Well, I don't want you to be one of these. Begin right and begin soon, for you are in one-way street and there is no going back to pick up missed chances and wasted opportunities; and the biggest miss is to miss the chance, which is yours now, of bringing to Jesus Christ a boy's, a girl's, love and loyalty.

Don't leave it till later and say, "To-morrow," for tomorrow will soon be yesterday, and past recalling. Nobody has ever been sorry they gave their heart to Jesus, but many have been sorry they didn't do it sooner. Begin now for you can't go back and pick up lost beginnings. A good old bishop once said the way to Heaven was to "take the first turning to the right and keep straight on." Take that first turning now. Begin to be Christ's disciple now, at the beginning of your life, and one-way street will have no sad and sorrowful regrets. It will be one way all the way and it will be Christ's way. You will go on from child's faith and love, to the faith and love of boy or girl, man or woman, right to old age,

one-way street shining ever more to the Perfect Day when you come at last with joy to the King's Palace.

It was an old man, with many regrets for his wasted youth that wrote "Remember thy Creator now, in the days of thy youth."

Take his counsel, for it is kind and good, and give yourself to Christ.

"Just as I am, young, strong and free,
To be the best that I can be,
For truth, and righteousness and Thee,
Lord of my life, I come."

CLIMBING UP TO CHRIST

"He ran before and climbed into a sycomore tree."
S. Luke xix. 4.

EVERYBODY knows the story of Jack and the Beanstalk. It is one of the first we ever heard. How we enjoyed hearing of Jack's climb up into the giant's country, and the treasures he found, and how at last he killed the giant!

We don't think much of it now. "It's a fairy-tale," we say; for we are growing older, and very wise, and we know that nobody ever climbed up a beanstalk into another world, and anyway there are no such things as giants. Yes! it's only a fairy-tale.

But there is a story in the New Testament that isn't a fairy-tale. It is true: and it tells how a man did climb up a tree, and did find a new world, and did kill a giant.

His name was Zacchæus. He was a little man and a very unhappy man, for he had no

friends. He was a tax-gatherer and everybody hated him because he screwed the taxes out of them without mercy, and everybody despised him because he was doing this for the Romans. All the year the people of Jericho were at the mercy of Zacchæus; but one day they had him at their mercy.

It was a day when Jesus of Nazareth was coming to Jericho. All the folk were in the street, waiting to see this wonderful teacher from Galilee; and Zacchæus was there, too.

But he was a little man and he couldn't see over the heads of the crowd. He ran up and down trying to get through to the front, but he couldn't find a chink, and nobody would make room for him. They squared their shoulders, and stuck out their elbows and enjoyed themselves thoroughly at his expense, chuckling and grinning and nudging each other in high glee, as he vainly ran up and down. At last in desperation, he climbed up a tree.

Then they were completely happy! To see the principal tax-collector of Jericho

clambering awkwardly up a tree, and perched in the branches like some fearful wildfowl, was surely the best of all jokes. They would be able to laugh at it for months afterwards. They felt at last they had got Zacchæus "up a tree."

Why was he so desperate to see Jesus? He was a man who had made a mess of his life. In one way he had succeeded, for he was rich, but in his heart he knew that his success was a ghastly failure. He had made up his mind to "get on." Money was the one thing that mattered. He must get money at any cost. He got it and now he found that he had paid too much for it and that all his money couldn't buy back the things he had let go. He had lost his friends. He had lost everybody's respect and good opinion. He had lost his own self-respect, for he knew that he had not got all his money honestly. Now he had his money and nothing else worth having, and that is to be very poor. Poor, lonely, little rich man! He was in one-way street and he couldn't go back and begin again. What was he to do?

There seemed just one chance. He had heard of Jesus and what things Jesus had done. Jesus was his one chance. He must see him. He had been ready to do anything for money; now he was ready to do anything to see Jesus. He didn't care what people thought. He didn't care what people said. He didn't care if people laughed. He was prepared even to make himself ridiculous, even to forget his dignity; and when a little, rich man will go that length, it means that he is in deadly earnest.

The crowd laughed at him. Jesus didn't. The crowd could only see the ridiculous side of things; but Jesus saw somethimg more, and Jesus didn't laugh. He looked up at Zacchæus in his tree, and said, "Zacchæus, make haste and come down; for to-day I must rest at your house!"

Greatly astonished Zacchæus comes down, and Jesus and he pass into the house, while, outside, the crowd grumble very indignantly. Their joke had somehow gone wrong. They did not know what had been going on in Zacchæus' heart, and now they didn't know

what was going on in Zacchæus' house.

But suddenly the door opens and Zacchæus, a new Zacchæus that they had never seen before, with a new look on his face, stands and cries out, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to feed the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold."

Nobody was laughing now; everybody was wondering; for a wonderful thing had happened, the most wonderful thing that can happen to anyone: salvation had come to Zacchæus.

He had climbed up a tree into a new world and a new life. He had climbed into the Kingdom of Heaven. And he had killed his giant, a very big and ugly one, whose name was "Greed."

I think the story means that if anyone is in dead earnest about finding Jesus, he will find Him; and the surest test that you are in earnest is that you are not afraid of being laughed at. If Zacchæus had been afraid of being laughed at, he wouldn't have climbed his sycamore tree; if he had not climbed

the tree, he would not have been seen by Jesus.

The fear of being laughed at is a very formidable giant. He has kept many an one from standing up for Jesus. Sometimes people are more ashamed of goodness than of wickedness. If you are in earnest about following Christ you won't care who laughs.

To be laughed at is a very little matter if Jesus says, "To-day I must abide in your heart."

"The God of Peace . . . make you perfect."—*Heb.* xiii. 20–21.

THE word that is "make perfect" in our English Bible means "restore," or "mend," or "knit together." When you know that, it sets one thinking of things beautiful and costly, that have been ill-used and marred, and that have been restored.

Let me tell you of three.

The first is St. Giles' Cathedral, that noble old church which stands in the High Street of Edinburgh. There Mary Queen of Scots sat and heard John Knox preach, and saw the Roman faith and worship pass away and give place to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To-day its grey old crown is the crown of Edinburgh as it has been for so many hundreds of years.

Once it was beautiful inside and outside. But what did men do to it? They put up partitions inside and divided it into four churches! In one chapel there was a police

office, and St. Giles' was a meeting place through the week for business men to meet in, and talk over their affairs and drive their bargains.

Outside there were built up between the buttresses, sheds and shanties, and shops, called "the Krames," until the church must have looked like an old hen with a lot of draggled and dirty chickens clustering round her!

For three hundred years it was like that, and then sixty-five years ago the task of restoration was begun by Mr. Chambers, who founded *Chambers' Journal*. First the "Krames" were swept away. Then the partitions were taken away by degrees. They divided people who ought not to have been divided, and they spoiled the church. At last they were gone, just as the divisions of the church in Scotland are being done away with now. And the lovely old church was restored. It bears the marks yet, for they can't be quite removed; but except for some scars, its beauty has been given back to it.

The second is a wonderful piece of tapestry. It is at Bayeux, in Normandy, and it is as

old as the Norman Conquest, for it is the story of the Norman Conquest, wrought out in cunning needle-work by the fingers of the ladies of Queen Matilda's court. It, too, had a sad story. Men didn't know what a treasure it was, and it hung in the Cathedral, and then lay rolled up in a corner, unvalued and forgotten for seven hundred years. Just think of it! The story of Harold and his shipwreck; William's trick to make him swear away the crown of England; the crossing of William's army; the battle of Hastings, and the death of Harold—all pictured by people who lived at the time, and saw the things themselves! and nobody cared for it. It was even pulled out to cover some army wagons in the French Revolution, when one man saved it. Napoleon saw it and took it to Paris. A hundred years ago it was given back to Bayeux, which had wakened up to the treasure it had so long neglected.

It was sorely tattered and torn, but loving hands wrought on it and restored it stitch by stitch. Now it hangs in a building specially

erected for it, and people come from all the world over to see it and to wonder.

The third thing is the Portland Vase. This is a beautiful vase of deep blue with lovely white figures wrought on it. It lay for thirteen hundred years in the tomb of a Roman Emperor until it was discovered four hundred years ago, and brought to England, and lent by the Duchess of Portland to the British Museum. There it stood in its beauty, a treasure, but a treasure unguarded, for who imagined anyone would harm it? But one day a man, moved by some monkeyish spirit of mischief, dashed it to pieces with a stone. And he couldn't be punished, for no law had provided for such a crime!

This, too, was restored. It seemed impossible. It seemed beyond repair, but love and patience did it, pieced the fragments together bit by bit and restored the Portland Vase.

It's terrible to think of such beautiful things ill-used and defaced, such lovely things shattered and broken; but it's fine to hear of their restoration: the defaced, divided

church restored; the wonderful tapestry sewed and mended and cared for; the broken vase made whole again.

But one sees this. It must have taken great love of beauty to restore the Portland Vase, and great patience to restore the Bayeux Tapestry; and much cost to restore St. Giles' Cathedral.

Love, Patience, Sacrifice, only these could do it.

Yet there is something more wonderful and lovely and priceless than things I have been telling you about. It is the human soul. It is God's own work.

When that is broken by passion, or wasted by neglect, or cut up into fragments by contending desires, can it be restored?

Some people say, "No. Evil habits can't be broken. Human nature can't be changed." That is not true. We can't do it, but God can. It is simply the gospel of Jesus Christ, that souls can be restored, human nature can be changed, evil habits can be ended. Souls that are defaced like old St. Giles', wasted like the Bayeux Tapestry,

broken like the Portland Vase, God can make perfect by the great love, the great patience, and the great sacrifice of Jesus. Jesus Himself once hung on a Cross, His body broken. He lay in a grave, His body dead, and God raised Him from the dead.

It is this God, the God "who brought again from the dead" our Lord Jesus, that has power to do this also. It is because He did that that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews dares to pray "the God of peace that brought from the dead our Lord Jesus, restore you."

It is good news that this can be, good news that nobody can fall so far as to be hopeless.

But it is even better news to know that your soul need never be broken and wasted. God can restore the fallen, but "He is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless"—not with the scars that sin leaves even on a soul restored—faultless, before the throne of the glory. That is how all who love you wish you, girls and boys, to know God, now, before you have fallen, that you may never fall.

KEEPING THE LID ON

"Be angry and sin not."—*Eph.* iv. 26.

Do you ever take pepper? Then this must have happened to you at some friend's house. You laid hold of the pepper-pot, and thought to add just a sprinkling to make your food more spicy. You upturned it and shook it, expecting it to behave as a well-behaved pepper pot with "its head screwed on" ought to behave. But it didn't. Its head wasn't well screwed-on. Its head, in fact, came off. It lost its head entirely, and where you wanted a sprinkling you got a deluge. Your soup was spoiled. It was too hot for anybody but a retired Indian colonel, and you sneezed, and sneezed, and tried to make the best of a bad job.

Your friends apologized and said, "Oh! we should have warned you about that pepper-pot. It always does that." So they should. But they should also have taken the trouble to see that its top was securely fixed, and didn't come off.

Some people are like that. Perhaps you are, but I hope you aren't. Friends warn you about them. They say, "So and so is a capital fellow, but he's awfully peppery. The least thing and the lid's off. He's a bit quick in the temper." Or perhaps, "So and so," after a flare-up that has made everybody very uncomfortable, apologizes and says, "I'm sorry, you must make allowance for me, I'm so quick-tempered."

Now that won't do. We have a right to expect pepper-pot lids to stay on; and we have a right to expect human pepper-pots to control their temper. They have no right to lose their heads so easily, and expect people to go on making allowance for them.

Of course, it is harder for some than for others. "Don't get so hot," somebody said to a quick-tempered old man, "control your temper." "Young man," he said, "I control my temper more in five minutes than you do in five years."

What is the human pepper-pot to do? Go on being a nuisance to himself and to everybody else, eternally blowing the lid off,

and eternally being ashamed and apologizing? Or try and get rid of anger altogether so that nothing will make him angry? Or set to work to control temper and screw the lid on tight, so that anger will be a useful thing in the right place and in the right measure?

The Bible says, "Be angry and sin not." Anger is a good thing. Sometimes we are right to be angry. It's not good to lose the power to be angry. Jesus was angry sometimes, and the Bible speaks of things that provoke the wrath of God. We are not meant to be jelly-fishes. Cruel things, unjust things, untrue, unclean things, ought to make us angry and indignant.

But anger uncontrolled can be a very bad thing. It is like fire, a good servant, but a bad master. Keep it behind bars and it warms the house, and cooks your dinner. Let it loose and it burns the house down. It is like gunpowder: to be taken great care of, to be used for blasting rocks out of the way.

You must keep anger under control. Use it against evil things, but don't leave it so

unguarded that any little joke or petty annoyance can set a match to it, and produce an explosion that blows everything to bits.

A wise man long ago said, "Pride robs me of my God; Envy robs me of my neighbour; Anger robs me of myself."

When a man has said to me, "I lost my temper," I have been tempted to say, "Pity the man that finds it"; but we don't lose our temper; we lose control of it.

It is simply dreadful to be the sort of man that can't stand a joke, whom it isn't safe to tease or chaff, with whom people have to be always on their guard in case some little thing touches his temper and off he goes with a bang, the lid off and the pepper all over everything. Such a boy or girl is going to have a bad time at school, and serve them right!

But a bad temper is your chance of having a good one. Anger is a talent. It is a bit of Divine fire in us.

God can be angry because He is holy Love, and cares enough for us to be angry with us. Be glad if you have a father and

mother who love you enough to be angry with you when you do deliberately what is wrong.

"Be angry and sin not" means "Be angry the right way." And what is that? Don't be angry without a cause. Don't be angry hastily. Don't keep your anger, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." Don't let it smoulder and smoke.

Jesus teaches us by His example how to be angry. He wasn't angry for Himself. His anger was always generous and unselfish. But He was angry when people were hard-hearted; when they were cruel to children and helpless things; when they profaned God's temple. He was angry at cruel and wicked things, and so ought we to be.

Anger is a sword of flame that God has given us to fight against evil things. We must never draw it without good cause, and when its work is done, we must put it back in to its sheath, and let it slumber in peace.

A STREET PREACHER

"Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy."—*Exod.* xx. 8.

THE banished Duke, in Shakespeare, talks about finding "sermons in stones"; I found this sermon on a paving-stone. Its preacher was old, very old, no one knows how old. His name is "Peever"—Peter Peever, D.D.! Little girls that play in the streets in Scotland, and I suppose in England too, know him very well. Perhaps they didn't know he was a D.D.? Well, I gave him his degree, for I thought he deserved it.

I like him because he tells me things: things I like to be told and things I need to be told. The thing I like to be told is that Spring has come.

How do we know Spring has arrived? It is no good looking at the calendar, for it tells us Spring is here when it may be still hard frost and bitter cold. The Bible says "the time of the singing of birds is come and the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in the

land." Here people write to the papers about the first daffodil, or the first swallow, and songs are written that say, "Spring is coming, for the swallows have come back to tell me so."

But I have a surer sign than any of these. It is when I see little girls chalking the pavements in mysterious patterns, and hopping gracefully, and skipping the Peever with clever feet from space to space up the ladder to the "box" at the end. There may be no flowers, no swallows, and frost yet in the fields; but I know that spring is really come, for "the Peevers have come back to tell me so."

How do children know when to start? I don't know. Newspapers tell us when cricket starts, and game-shooting begins, but they never have a paragraph to say "Peever is in." It took the Churches centuries to fix the date of Easter and they haven't agreed yet; but children have settled, quietly and without quarrelling, when tops shall appear, and marbles, when the voice of "bulls and plunkers" shall be heard in the land, when

hoops shall spin down the streets: and they come and go as regular as clock-work.

The thing Dr. Peever tells me that I need to be told is this. I watched some little girls. They chalked out a long double ladder, and numbered the spaces, and some they marked "Rest." Then they started, I loved watching them: they were so nippy at it! I couldn't do it, and I love watching people doing things I can't do, and doing them well. Up went the Peever from space to space. Never a short shot, never lying across a line, never too far, till it rested neatly in the middle of the "Box."

I asked them why they marked some spaces "Rest." They looked at me with a gentle astonishment at the ignorance of grown-ups. Fancy not knowing that. Clearly my education had been neglected.

The rests were needed. It was too long a strain to go on all the way hopping on one foot. So the "Rests" were carefully set, so the other foot could come down, and they could start off again fresh. They could never have done it without the "Rests."

The foot would tire, its touch would fail. The Peever would land on the lines, or miss the "Box" at the end. The "Rests" were needed.

And through the children planning the course for their game, came the thought of the wise love of God, planning out our lives for us, and saying, "My children can hop on one foot for six days, but they need a rest after that. I shall mark one day in seven for Rest." "Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath Day, and hallowed it."

God has made us so that we can work for six days, but need rest on the seventh; and so that we do our best work if we work six days and rest one.

You couldn't play Peever without the "Rest" spaces. You are glad of them. You start fresh from them for the next bit. And you can't make a job of the big game of life without God's "Rest" days. That busy foot, that one side of us, that is hard at it all week, in school, in homework, in business, must stop, and the other foot, the other side of us, our Soul, must come into play. We

must go to Church and worship God and get new strength for the week begun. Rest, and God restores our bodies. Worship, and God restores our souls.

You couldn't attempt to play Peever without the "Rests": you have far more sense. Don't leave God's "Rests" out of the game of life.

"Remember the Sabbath Day." Keep it, and keep it holy.

THE THORN THAT BLOSSOMED

"Instead of the thorn."—*Isaiah*, lv. 13.

An old legend tells that Joseph of Arimathea sailed over the seas to England long ago bearing the cup that Jesus used at the Last Supper. When he came to Glastonbury, he and his company rested, for they were tired, at the top of a long hill called "Weary-All Hill." There he struck his hawthorn staff into the ground, and it took root, and there sprang from it a whitethorn tree, which every Christmas Day miraculously "burst" into blossom.

Now there *was* a whitethorn at Glastonbury, and it *did* blossom with a second blossoming at Christmas-time; but whether it sprang from Joseph's staff I cannot say, and do not propose to ask.

But there is truth in this old story, and it is a truth of Christmas Day.

Long ago God's ancient people was just like a lopped and withered stick. Its branches

had been stripped and cut away. Its pride brought very low. Winter was come upon it and it seemed quite dead.

But a prophet dreamed that out of "the lopped stump of Jesse" there should come a shoot, and a twig out of the battered root; and at long last the dream came true.

On Christmas Day, at Bethlehem, the shrivelled-up stump of the nation of David burst into blossom, and the blossom was Jesus Christ our Lord. It had not seemed likely. It was as strange and wonderful as a thorn-tree blossoming in mid-winter, but "the winter of our discontent" was "made glorious summer" by the sun of God's love. Though Mary belonged to the family of David, she was the wife of a humble carpenter of Nazareth; yet her son was our Saviour. He was the beautiful and fragrant white bloom.

The story of the thorn at Glastonbury is just a poetical way of saying "Christ was born at Bethlehem," and poetry is as true as history.

And it is also the story of what happens

every year as Christmas comes round. Human nature is the thorn, and it is sometimes a very prickly thorn indeed. The battle of life batters it and makes it often hard and nubbly. The cold winds of the world shrivel up its leaves of kindness and beat down its tender gentlenesses. It seems sometimes as if it were dead and hopeless, as if it can only bear thorns and things that wound, wars and strifes and disputes.

Then comes Christmas, and the old thorn bursts into blossom. It blooms in kindness and goodwill to men. People that all the year pass each other unheeding, not knowing each other, not wanting to know each other, scrambling against each other in trams and trains, hustling against each other in business, now beam good nature on each other, wish each other, "Merry Christmas!"

People that for the rest of the year are too dignified to carry parcels are seen with great awkward armfuls, and when they go into train or tram with them, people who at other times would scowl at them for bringing their awkward parcels to crowd folk up, smile and

grow kinder, wondering what is in them, and thinking of the children whose happiness is done up in brown paper.

Stiff bachelor uncles and maiden aunts that at other times look as if they had forgotten they had ever been children seem to have suddenly remembered. They are seen buying dolls unashamed. They are seen absorbed, chuckling over clockwork toys. They even leave their business to attend to these things. I believe they sit up at night and play with them!

Grave old folks pull crackers and wear paper caps. Quite old folk—people about thirty and even forty years old!—hang up their stockings.

Everybody is laughing and happy, forgetting themselves, forgetting how old they are, forgetting business and the things that make them old, and rejoicing in the joy of others.

What a happy time it is! What has happened? Why the thorn tree has blossomed again on Christmas Day.

Once the same old prophet that dreamed of the dead stump blossoming, looked out over

a troubled world and saw men like beasts, greedy as lions, treacherous as wolves, brutal as bears, poisonous as serpents; and he had another dream. He dreamed that some day all these brutishnesses of men's natures would be changed and "a little Child shall lead them." That, too, is coming slowly true. Jesus is leading us, slowly but surely, out of the things that make for war and its savage struggles to a better way, and some day the thorn tree of the human heart will bear the wonderful blossom of peace on earth.

Boys and girls, I wish you a Happy Christmas, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave us Christmas. "Instead of the thorn" of selfishness which makes our life so prickly and unkind and unhappy, may there blossom in your hearts anew the wonderful flower of Love.

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Robertson, Stuart

Tigers' teeth

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